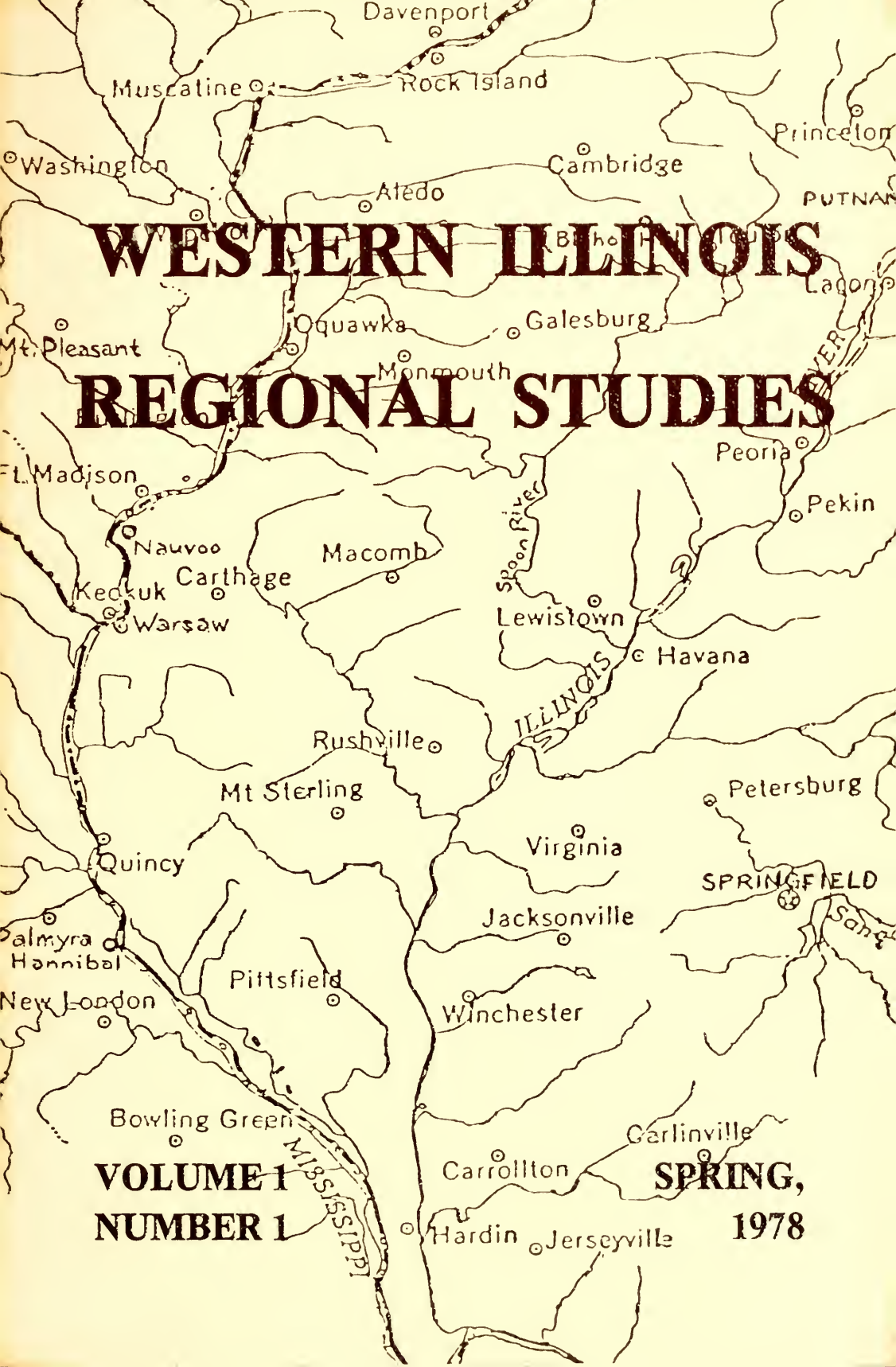

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WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT: ILLINOIS LANDOWNER

David J. Baxter

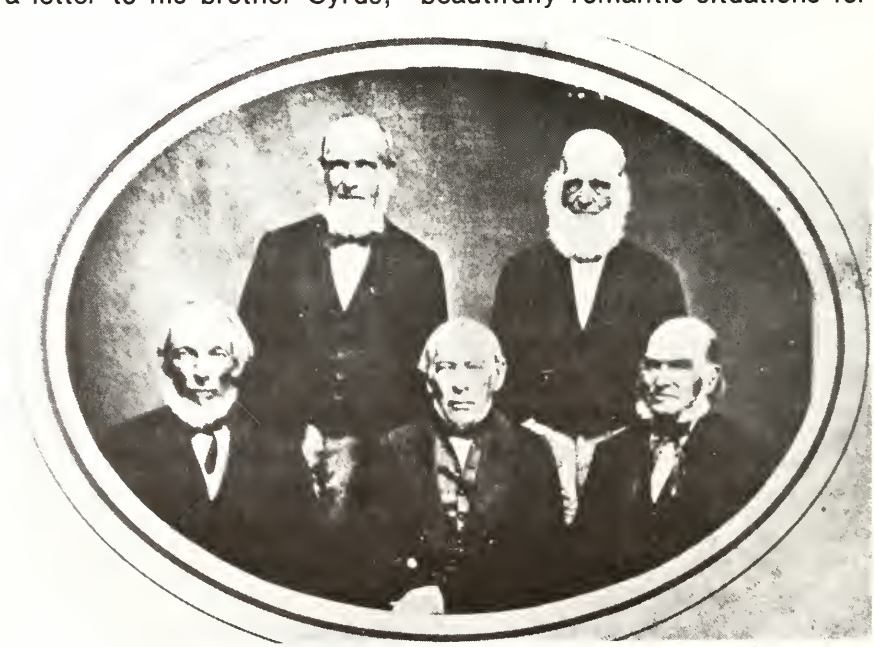
First as editor of the NEW-YORK REVIEW AND ATHENEUM MAGAZINE (1825-26), and then during his long tenure as editor of the NEW YORK EVENING POST (1829-78), William Cullen Bryant enthusiastically endorsed America's westward settlement. He supported legislation for the exploration and settlement of Oregon twenty-five years before that area officially became a territory. In 1830 he frequently editorialized in the POST in defense of Andrew Jackson's harsh Indian policy, especially his controversial Indian Removal Bill which called for the gradual displacement of all eastern tribes to west of the Mississippi. During the 1830's when the rights of squatters were being debated by the Whigs and Democrats, Bryant, a sympathizer with the radical Locofoco wing of the Democratic party, continually advocated stronger pre-emption legislation in order to protect a settler's right to buy land at the minimum government price when his sections came into market. He was captivated in 1845 by Asa Whitney's plan for a transcontinental railroad almost a quarter century before such a railroad became a reality, and he supported unlimited immigration to America because he believed that the West was so boundless that it could absorb all who wished to emigrate from Europe. But beyond the editorializing demanded by his position, he was also personally involved in promoting western settlement.

Although Bryant himself never resided in the West, his family felt and followed its allure. As the Bryant farmland at Cummington, Massachusetts, became less productive, William's brothers prepared to move west, either to Illinois or Michigan. Arthur Bryant left for Illinois in 1830 and squatted on a farm near Jacksonville. John Howard Bryant, the other poet in the family, followed soon after and went to work on Arthur's farm. Cyrus

Bryant, meanwhile, was attempting to establish a farm near Adrian in Lenawee County, Michigan. By 1835 William's four brothers, mother, and sister Louisa were all settled in the West near Princeton, Illinois. Evidence suggests that William influenced the family's final selection of the Illinois prairies as a homestead instead of the oak-openings of south-central Michigan. As Bryant's writings before 1830 indicate, he had long conceived of the prairies as an ideal landscape, and the reports of the soil and scenery sent back by his brothers could only have enhanced his image of the prairies as a vast, fertile garden where wealth and happiness could be secured with little effort. His idealization of the prairies received its fullest expression in his 1833 poem "The Prairies," which begins:

> These are the gardens of the Desert, these
> The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
> For which the speech of England has no name—
> The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
> And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
> Takes in the encircling vastness.[1]

Not only did Illinois provide, as Arthur Bryant described in a letter to his brother Cyrus, "beautifully romantic situations for



Courtesy of the Bureau County Board of Supervisors.

THE BRYANT BROTHERS
Seated: (Left to Right) John Howard Bryant, Cyrus Bryant, Austin Bryant
Standing: (Left to Right) Arthur Bryant, William Cullen Bryant

farms,"[2] it was healthier than Michigan, and there was not the bother of hewing down so many trees and digging up stumps to create a workable farm. During the summer of 1831 when John Bryant contemplated abandoning the Illinois venture to join Cyrus in Michigan, William talked him out of it, citing the negative reports the western writer and editor Timothy Flint had published of the state.[3] Later, John, in turn, tried to convince his brother Austin that a land of promise awaited his arrival in Illinois. John wrote home to his mother in October, 1833, that it was "high time for him [Austin] to be on his way. It is a pity for him to spend his strength in digging the poor soil of the Green Mountains when there is so much first rate land ready for the plough in these parts, where he can get a better living than he gets there with one half the labor."[4] Cyrus too, once he left Michigan, discovered the truth of his brothers' felicitous reports and described his farm in the same pastoral mode all his brothers were inclined to use. "There is a great variety of fruit on it," he wrote his mother, "some sandy knolls making beautiful places for buildings, for fruit trees and grape vines—a small creek running through it having excellent bottom land on its margin for meadow land,—and as much good first rate arable land as we should ever want, & timber tolerably convenient—firewood enough near by."[5]

Bryant seriously considered joining the westward migration as he grew increasingly dissatisfied with his strenuous editorial duties for the NEW YORK EVENING POST. In 1833 he thought of someday buying a farm in Illinois near his brothers, hopefully upon his return from his first visit to Europe planned for the following year. He and his wife wanted the farm "in order that," Frances Bryant wrote, "we may have a place where on to rest (if we need one) when we return."[6] The idea of moving west was strong in the poet again in 1836. He wrote to his brother John, "I think of making some disposition of my interest in the EVENING POST and coming out to the western country to try my fortune. . . . I have had my fill of town life, and begin to wish to pass a little time in the country."[7] William never did make the move, but he did visit Illinois in 1832, 1840, 1846, and 1851, and he invested periodically in land in and near Princeton from which he received a moderate profit.

On April 10, 1832, Bryant wrote his friend Richard Henry

Dana, Sr., an early editor of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW and father of the author of TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST, that he was going to Illinois "in the course of about four weeks, with no other purpose in the world than to look at it."[8] In truth, he was also interested in buying Illinois real estate. Shortly after arriving in Jacksonville in June, 1832, William and John set out on horseback for a tour of the prairies. William wrote his wife Frances, "The first day brought us to Springfield the capital of Sangamon County where the land office for this district is kept and where I was desirous of making some inquiries as to the lands in market."[9] From Springfield William and his brother rode north toward Pekin, crossing the Salt and Mackinaw rivers, and stopping for the night at a place called Pleasant Grove with a man Bryant referred to only as Shurtliff. William described the area in the same letter to his wife.

> Shurtliff lives near the north end of Pleasant Grove and within four miles of the northern limit of the lands in market. The soil is fertile and well watered, the streams being rather more rapid than in Jacksonville and the region more than usually healthy. It is within eight miles of Pekin on the Illinois river, so that it is within convenient distance of a market, there is plenty of stone within a few miles and sawmills have been erected on some of the streams. I am strongly inclined to purchase a quarter section in this place.[10]

In writing his mother after his return from Illinois, William related that he had found a quarter section of 160 acres in Tazewell County that he especially liked and had left John the money to buy it.[11] Apparently the transaction was never made, however, for there is neither a record of it in the Tazewell County Recorder's office, nor did William ever write of the purchase again. Almost all of the land in which William Cullen Bryant speculated lay in Bureau County near Princeton, Illinois, where his brothers moved in the spring of 1833.

The inducement that kept America moving west was the promise of cheap land, for public land purchased at the minimum government price of $1.25 per acre could be sold at a substantial profit once an area became more settled. Speculation was a game at which everyone along the frontier and many back East played. The Bryant family was no exception, and William and his brothers, especially John, were more successful at it than most. The involvement of the Bryant brothers in the political affairs of Bureau County gave them an advantage, carefully exploited, in the very risky business of land speculation. Not only were John and Cyrus Bryant

instrumental in the maneuverings that led to the formation of Bureau County, John was also the county's first Recorder of Deeds, and Cyrus the first Circuit Clerk. Both held a variety of political positions in the county throughout their lifetimes. When the Bryant family first moved to Princeton in 1833, the town, as yet unincorporated, was part of Putnam County. The nearest land office was at Springfield. In January, 1833, the citizens of Princeton petitioned the state government at Vandalia for the establishment of a new land district for their region. Whoever became the land agent, recorder, or receiver in the land office would be in favorable position to speculate in land, to facilitate land purchases by absentee landowners for a fee or a share of the land, or to lend money to newcomers at exorbitant interest rates of up to sixty per cent.[12] Cyrus Bryant tried to use William's influential positions as editor of the POST and friend of Democratic congressman Gulian C. Verplanck of New York to secure a position in the new land office. William wrote to Verplanck about the matter on January 25, 1833.

My reason for writing at present, however, is, that I wish to get for my brother, in case the [land] district is established, the place of either Register or Receiver in the land office. Which of these offices is best I do not know; you perhaps may; of course he would prefer the most lucrative. He has all the qualifications necessary of both character and capacity, and being of a studious turn, would be perhaps allowed leisure for the prosecution of his favorite pursuit, the natural sciences. I need not say how much you would oblige, by doing what may occur to you as likely to promote his appointment.[13]

The Bryant petition failed, however, most likely because the political power of Putnam County still resided in the county seat at Hennepin, and not with the newcomers at Princeton. But when Bureau County was formed in 1837 and Princeton incorporated as a city in 1838, both John and Cyrus Bryant won appointments that could aid them and William in the buying and selling of land.

The first years of John, Cyrus, and Arthur Bryant in Princeton were financially difficult. In order to raise cash Arthur Bryant taught school for a time, and John and Cyrus borrowed heavily. The family's Illinois venture would have collapsed if William had not provided emergency funds. On April 25, 1833, William wrote his mother at Cummington about the aid he had furnished.

I sent Arthur $100 according to his request. As Cyrus also wanted to borrow money and as his case is even harder than Arthur's I sent him $100 also. This with what I lent him before makes $300. I have as I suppose you know advanced to John $200. I have also $300 in Illinois of which $200 are at 25 per cent and $100 at 33 1/3 per cent. I have written to Cyrus and John to take the interest of this money as it accrues. [14]

Later in April William would send Cyrus an additional $250. John Bryant wrote of his tenuous situation in Illinois to his mother in December, 1833. "I am very poor. If my debts were paid, I should not be worth a farthing. William's assistance is all that has held me up."[15] During his first year in Princeton, nevertheless, John, despite his poverty, began buying land with the money he borrowed, mostly town lots ranging in size from one to eight acres and in price from five to twenty dollars, and often in partnership with Lazarus Reeve, whose son Tracy later married Austin Bryant's daughter Sarah. In 1833 William also began his pattern of land investment which would continue until 1878.

On August 15, 1833, William wrote to Cyrus,

I have concluded to take the two town lots you speak of, as I believe I have already mentioned in a letter to you or John. I have written to John to pay for them out of the money that is to come from Cutler. Since your foolish law limiting the rate of interest to twelve percent, the effect of which will be to keep money out of your state, I have no doubt it is better to invest money in land than to lend it. It must be worth 33 or 25 per cent to the settler, or he would not offer it—if so, it must be worth nearly as much to one who employs it in the same way with the settler—that is, who invest it in land.[16]

These lots, fifty-two and sixty-nine in the town of Princeton, were purchased in Cyrus Bryant's name and not officially "sold" to William until 1837. The sale of the lots some years later illustrates the rising value of Illinois land in the mid-nineteenth century. William purchased both lots for five dollars. He sold lot fifty-two on January 16, 1865, to a Cyril Rawson for $1,600, and lot sixty-nine on April 7, 1855, to a Dolan P. Bingham for $2,500. What use was made of the lots between the times they were bought and sold is not clear. Lot sixty-nine definitely had a house on it when it was sold in 1855, and since this lot was to have been Fanny Bryant's, William's daughter, the house was perhaps built according to plans she made which were sent to John Bryant in 1846.[17] A letter dated March 29, 1855, discusses the sale.

I have hesitated somewhat to accept Mr. Bingham's proposition for this occasion. When I had the two lots entered I designed one of them for each of my daughters. The lot no. 69 was to be Fanny's as I have made it so by my will. If it is to be sold the proceeds ought to be secured to her, so that she could receive the interest. I have therefore concluded to have the place sold for the price you mention and the amount secured to Fanny . . . . So, if Mr. Bingham buys the house and the lot let the proceeds be secured to Mrs. Fanny Bryant Godwin of Rosly, Queens County Long Island—or rather New York, for she is yet in New York—but let me have the papers. [18]

If houses were built on the lots, they were probably rented for a number of years before being sold, adding further to William Cullen Bryant's income from Illinois land investment.

From the extensive correspondence between William Cullen Bryant and his brother John, and from the records of the Bureau County Court in Princeton, the following pattern emerges of William's investments in Illinois real estate. John acted independently as William's agent throughout the decades during which they speculated, often making initial purchases in his own name and then "reselling" the land to his famous brother. William often did not know until months later that he had acquired more land. On March 25, 1855, William wrote to John, "I have a deed from you and another from Olds, both of them I suppose at Princeton, which I shall be obliged to you if you would look up and send me. At the same time you will give me a list of my lands in Illinois, which I am a little uncertain about in the many changes which have been made."[19] Most likely, William informed John of an amount he wished to invest, and John would buy the land he believed would bring a profit. This was the case at least for the extensive purchases of 1860 where

Courtesy of the Bureau County Board of Supervisors.

John Howard Bryant's Cabin in Princeton, Ill. Built by him in June, 1834.

William limited his investment to $20,000 when John wanted him to go higher. William wrote to John on August 20, 1860 about the sum.

> I wrote you not long since that I wish to invest only $20,000 at the West—repairs and fencing included. I have since received your letter relating to the matter. In the $20,000 I do not mean to include the fencing of the lands which I already owned, and which you thought of raising wheat upon. But all the new purchases with the incidental expenses I wish brought within that sum. Having that amount to invest, I wish to be understood literally that I desire literally to stop when it is exhausted, and make no subsequent additions at least until I am in funds to do so.[20]

Very little of the land William bought was left unimproved, most of it being rented to new settlers until land prices warranted selling. William occasionally arranged for his brother-in-law, Justin H. Olds, who owned a brick kiln, to build houses and fences on his land, thereby further increasing its value. Fences were an expensive but necessary measure to keep neighbors from using the land to graze their cattle.

William and John carefully watched the factors affecting the land market. In 1848 William told John not to sell any of his land until they could see what effect a new canal might have on prices. With the natural increase in land values, the capital improvements they made, rents from tenants, and interest from mortgages (seven per cent or a portion of the crop) when the land was finally sold, William's profits were assured. Of the more than 2,300 officially recorded acres he purchased and sold in Bureau and Lee counties between 1833 and 1878, he was forced to sell only 280 acres at a loss. Two quarter sections were given as gifts to his niece Julia Louisa Olds, and nephew John H. Olds, in 1872. It is possible, however, that William owned more land than was officially recorded. His letters hint at this, and an early history of Ohio Township, Illinois, mentions the sale of some land owned by William Cullen Bryant to a Mr. Conner, of which there is no record.[21] Some of the land purchased with William's money probably remained in John's name.

By the extravagant standards of Illinois land speculators in mid-century, when entrepreneurs like Henry L. Ellsworth bought tens of thousands of acres at a time (18,000 in 1835 alone), William Cullen Bryant's investments were small.[22] Even if he did keep some of his land in his brothers' names, his total acquisitions over a forty-five year period could hardly have exceeded 3,000 acres. Yet, in a sense, it is ironic that Bryant invested along the frontier at all. Because of his familiarity with the tenuousness of his brothers'

frontier beginnings and his belief in the fundamental right of the western settler not to be threatened by eastern businessmen, Bryant fought in his editorials for squatters' rights. In 1837 during the pre-emption controversy, Bryant referred to squatters as being "adventurous," "moral," "intelligent," "some of the best and purest men it has ever been our fortune to be acquainted with," and he printed this argument in their defense: [23]

> Nearly all that portion of this territory lying north of the Illinois, and bounded on the west, north, and east, by the Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Rock Rivers respectively, has been for sometime past in the market and subject to entry at the land office at ten shillings per acre. This at most does not exceed one tenth part of its actual value. This fact having become known to eastern capitalists, immense tracts of the best land have been purchased by individuals or companies—not for the purpose of improving it; but merely to leave it entirely useless until they can sell it to actual settlers at vastly augmented prices, or settle it with their own tenants! You will readily perceive what an incubus is thus fastened upon the settlement and the prosperity of the country. . . . Immense tracts of country in Illinois and Wisconsin are thinly settled by persons having no legal title to the land they cultivate. Congress have at various times passed laws giving the right of pre-emption to persons under similar circumstances, thus offering a direct encouragement for the settlement of the public lands in this manner. No such law is, however, in existence at the present time, so that the settler has now no legal security for his title.[24]

Bryant, however, in 1837, was an absentee landlord, even though a small one, buying cheaply and selling at a profit to new settlers, or, while land values increased, renting his land to tenant farmers and reinvesting the proceeds. The Jacksonian Democrat who publicly advocated cheap western land and the protection of settlers from fluctuating land prices, privately engaged in actions which compromised his principles, at least when those principles were formed in the 1830's when the land around Princeton was a frontier. Perhaps in the 1830's it was Bryant's compromise of principle even more than lack of funds that kept his investments so modest. The fact remains, nevertheless, that for most of his life William Cullen Bryant had a deep personal interest in the growth of the state of Illinois.

APPENDIX

William Cullen Bryant's Land Transactions in Illinois.
Compiled from Bureau County Court Records, Princeton, Illinois.

July 14, 1835:
Purchased from the United States Government for $300—the Southeast Quarter and also the East Half of the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Seventeen, North of Range Nine, Bureau County, containing 240 acres. Sold on February 28, 1851, to John H. Bryant for $200.

Sept. 20, 1837:
Purchased from Cyrus Bryant for $5.00—Lots Number Fifty-two and Sixty-nine in the town of Princeton. Lot Number Fifty-two was sold on January 16, 1865, to Cyril Rawson for $1,600. Lot number Sixty-nine was sold on April 7, 1855, to Dolan P. Bingham for $2,500.

January 10, 1839:
Purchased from John H. Bryant for $100—the West Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-five in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Six, Bureau County, containing eighty acres. Sold on September 14, 1853, to Charles Atkinson for $1,000.

March 14, 1844:
Purchased from John H. Bryant for $500—the East Half of the Southeast Quarter and the East Half of the West Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Five in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Seven, Bureau County, containing 120 acres. Sold on August 3, 1846, to Jacob Galer for $450 cash plus mortgage terms. As part of this same purchase Galer obtained 120 acres from John H. Bryant. Galer's mortgage was held by both William and John and required him to pay 1,900 bushels of wheat over the next four years.

March 25, 1851:
Purchased from John H. Bryant for $200—the Northeast Quarter of

Section Number Fourteen; the East Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Eleven; the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section Number Twelve; and the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Twelve, all in Township Number Eighteen, North of Range Nine; and also the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-one in Township Number Seventeen, North of Range Eight, all in Bureau County, containing in all 640 acres. Sold the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Fourteen to Lyman Pratt on July 24, 1969, for $6,400. Sold the South Half of the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Twelve in Township Number Eighteen on January 23, 1867, to Dennis Hayes for $2,500, $500 down plus $500 a year at seven per cent interest for four years. Sold the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Twelve in Township Number Eighteen on January 23, 1867, to J. H. Bonless for $1,500, $250 down plus $250 a year at seven per cent interest for four years. Sold the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Twelve in Township Number Eighteen on January 31, 1867, to John McKavitt for $1,250, $250 down plus $250 a year at seven per cent interest for four years. Sold the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-one in Township Number Seventeen on July 16, 1869, to William Morgan for $4,500, $1,000 down plus $875 a year at seven per cent interest for four years. Bryant's sales of other tracts in this group have not been recorded.

June 10, 1854:
Purchased from John H. Bryant for $200—the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Thirty-six in Township Number Nineteen, North of Range Eight, Lee County, containing 160 acres. Sold on October 22, 1868 to James Fuller for $3,200.

August 3, 1854:
Purchased from John H. Bryant for $640—the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-nine in Township Number Eighteen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing 160 acres. Sold on October 16, 1875, to Thomas J. Westbrook for $4,500.

October 25, 1858:
Purchased from William Carter for $3,100—Lot Five on the East Half of Ithe Southwest Quarter and the West Half of the Southeast

Quarter of Section Number Thirty-three; and also the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-one, less twenty acres, in Township Number Seventeen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing in all 140.5 acres. Sold Lot Five on April 15, 1878, to Thomas Bowin for $1.00. (Bowin sold this lot a month later for $40. It is not clear why Bryant sold the lot for the token price of a dollar.) Sold the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-one on July 19, 1869, for $5,000 plus the 1869 taxes on the property. John H. Bryant held the mortgage on $1850 of the purchase price, payable at $462.50 a year plus seven per cent interest for four years.

July 18, 1860:
Purchased from William Blake for $3,000—the Southeast Quarter of Section NumberThirty-three in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing 160 acres. "Sold" to his niece Julia Louisa Olds on November 15, 1872, for $1.00.

July 21, 1860:
Purchased from Jones P. Cooper for $4,755—the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Eighteen in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, less forty acres from the East side, containing in all 117 acres. Sold on April 8, 1868, to William Horton for $3,500.

July 31, 1860:
Purchased from William Porter for $2,000—the West Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-eight in Township Number Seventeen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing eight acres; and also part of the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-seven in Township Number Seventeen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing 26.96 acres. For the sale of the West Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-eight, see the entry below for March 27, 1861. Sold the part of the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-seven on October 28, 1864, to David Warrington for $350.

August 17, 1860:
Purchased from Robert Hauck for $3,970—the South Half of the Southwest Quarter of Section Number Thirty, less twenty acres, and the Northwest Quarter of Section Number Thirty-one, all in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Nine, Bureau County, containing in all 264.72 acres. Sold all on December 6, 1867, to Robert Kitterman for $6,000.

October 7, 1860:
Purchased from H. A. Starkweather for $4,000—the Southeast Quarter of Section Number Thirty-three in Township Number Sixteen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing 160 acres. "Sold" to his nephew John H. Olds on November 25, 1772, for $1.00. See entry for July 18, above.

March 27, 1861:
Purchased from Thomas Vaughan for $1,600—the East Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-eight in Township Number Seventeen, North of Range Eight, Bureau County, containing 160 acres. Sold all of the Northeast Quarter of Section Number Twenty-eight (see entry for July 31, 1860, above) on September 28, 1866, to William Morgan for $5,600, $2,400 down plus $800 a year at seven per cent interest for four years.

NOTES

[1]THE POLITICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, Roslyn edition, ed. Henry C. Sturges and Richard Stoddard (1903; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 130.

[2]Arthur Bryant to Cyrus Bryant, November 29, 1831. Bryant Family Association Papers, Bureau County Historical Society, Princeton, Illinois.

[3]William Cullen Bryant II and Thomas G. Voss, eds., THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, 1809-1836 (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1975), p. 306.

[4]John Bryant to Austin Bryant, October 6, 1833, Bryant Family Association Papers.

[5]Cyrus Bryant to Sarah Snell Bryant, October 8, 1832, Bryant Family Association Papers.

[6]Keith Huntress and Fred W. Lorch, eds., "Bryant and Illinois: Further Letters of the Bryant Family," THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY, 15 (1943), p. 639.

[7]Parke Godwin, LIFE OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT (New York: D. Appleton, 1883), I, 322.

[8]LETTERS OF BRYANT, p. 325.

[9]Ibid., p. 345.

[10]Ibid., p. 347.

[11]Ibid., p. 356.

[12]Paul W. Gates, LANDLORDS AND TENANTS ON THE PRAIRIE FRONTIER (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 52-53.

[13]LETTERS OF BRYANT, p. 368.

[14]Ibid., pp. 371-72.

[15]John Bryant to Sara Snell Bryant, December 25, 1833, Bryant Family Association Papers.

[16]LETTERS OF BRYANT, p. 378.

[17]William Cullen Bryant to John Bryant, September 15, 1846, Bryant-Goodwin Collection, New York Public Library.

[18]"Bryant and Illinois," p. 642.

[19]Ibid., p. 641.

[20]Ibid., p. 645.

[21]Frederick J. Walter, "Some Ohio History of Great Interest," EARLY PIONEERS AND SOME EARLY HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE AND TOWNSHIP OF OHIO, Scrapbook of the Bureau County Historical Society (Princeton, Illinois, n.d.), p. 12.

[22]LANDLORDS AND TENANTS, p. 241. Henry Ellsworth (1791-1858), lawyer and agriculturalist, was born in Windsor, Connecticut. He became interested in western land in 1832 during a tour of the Southwest in his capacity as superintendent of the settlement of the Indian tribes forced west of the Mississippi by Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Bill of 1830. Ellsworth became the first United States Commissioner of Patents in 1835, the year he also began investing heavily in the Grand Prairie region of Indiana and Illinois. He eventually took up residence in Lafayette, Indiana. At the time of his death he owned over 120,000 acres in Indiana and Illinois.

[23]NEW YORK EVENING POST, 3 Feb., 1837, p. 2.

[24]NEW YORK EVENING POST, 1 Feb., 1837, p. 2.

THE GARDEN MYTH IN "THE PRAIRIES"

Edwin R. Booher

One of the earliest major poems about the Midwest is William Cullen Bryant's "The Prairies." Written after a visit to Illinois in 1832, the poem clearly embodies significant forms of American idealism and denotes the emergence of the West as an important literary theme. For several reasons—not the least important of which is the difference between what Bryant saw on the frontier and his poetical treatment of that experience—the poem is an instructive excursion into American myth.

The lengthy journey from New York to visit two of his brothers disclosed to Bryant the realities of life in Illinois, and the letters he wrote to his wife indicate diverse and conflicting impressions.[1] In the poem, however, the experience is transformed into a pastoral vision of the prairies, a romantic blank verse treatment on the order of his famous "Thanatopsis" and "A Forest Hymn" of the sublime aspects of Illinois scenery. First published in KNICKERBOCKER MAGAZINE in December, 1833, and subsequently included in Bryant's 1834 and later collections of poems, "The Prairies" has been generally praised and often anthologized. Bryant wrote other poems based on the trip to Illinois—"The Hunter of the Prairies" and "The Painted Cup"—and visited Illinois again in 1846 after his mother and brothers had moved to Princeton; but "The Prairies" is unquestionably his most significant poetic treatment of western material.

The route Bryant chose allowed him to see much of the American landscape. Leaving New York on May 22, 1832, he traveled by stagecoach, boat, and (briefly) train to the Ohio River. Then, by way of Cincinnati and Louisville, steamboats took him down to the Mississippi to St. Louis and up the Illinois River to a landing about twenty miles from Jacksonville. He arrived on the twelfth of June.[2]

Interestingly enough, Bryant's western journey coincided with relevant historical circumstances that are excluded from the poem. At various river stops, he heard talk of Indian attacks in Illinois and informed his wife that he would have to return by the same route instead of crossing the prairie to Chicago as planned. A long-standing conflict between whites and Indians had resulted the previous year in the use of a volunteer army to drive Black Hawk and his Sauk and Fox people from their village at the junction of the Rock and Mississippi rivers. On April 5, 1832, Black Hawk and about a thousand persons, perhaps half of whom were warriors, recrossed the Mississippi and moved about forty miles up the Rock River, intending to exercise what they considered was their right to farm the land there and expecting to gain support from other Indian tribes as well as from the British if again confronted by the militia.

As preparations were made to send both the Illinois militia and the United States Army against him, Black Hawk came to realize that aid would not be given and that he could not remain with his people and fight. On May 14, a week before Bryant's departure from New York, Black Hawk attempted to confer under a flag of truce with an advance detachment of the militia. However, the undisciplined militiamen took his messengers prisoner, fired upon those who had been sent to watch from a distance, and then murdered one of the captives.[3] Following that incident and Black Hawk's retaliatory charge, the Indians were pursued through several encounters and, several weeks after Bryant's return to the East, were trapped as they attempted to cross the Mississippi. On August 2, in what is called the Bad Axe Massacre, the troops slaughtered men, women, and children who were plunging into the river in their desperate scramble for safety. By the time the poem was completed for publication the following year, Black Hawk had been imprisoned for several months and, still a prisoner, given a "celebrity's" tour of eastern cities before being freed at Rock Island. In September, 1833, most remaining tribes had been evicted by treaty from territory in Illinois.

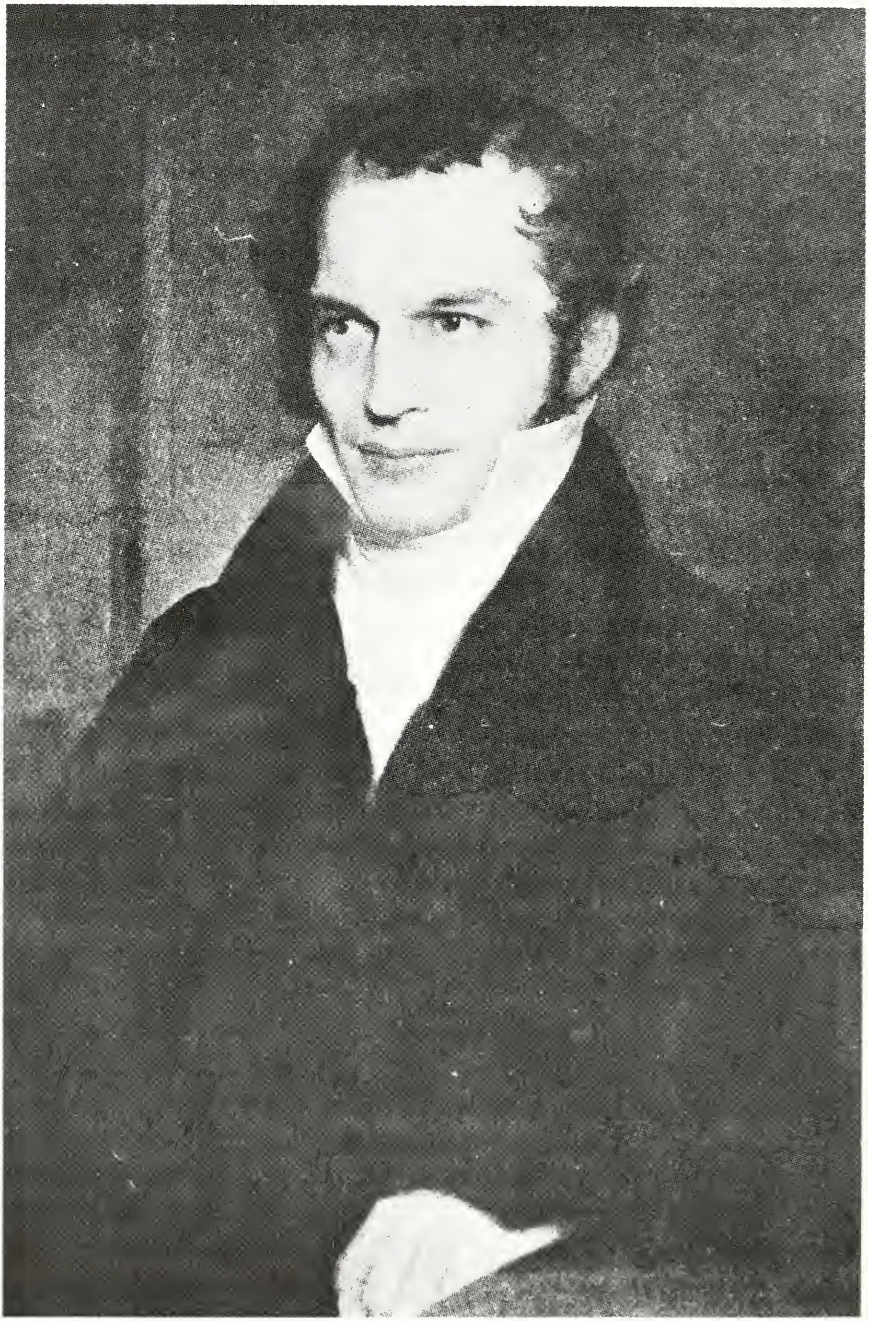
Nor were conditions in frontier towns idyllic. John Bryant was a clerk in Jacksonville, which the poet described to his wife as "a horribly ugly village, composed of little shops and dwellings, stuck close together around a dirty square, in the middle of which stands

the ugliest of possible brick court-houses, with a spire and weather-cock on its top." Arthur Bryant farmed near the village, living in a two-room log cabin with kitchen and parlor separated by an open-roofed passage "large enough to drive a wagon through," as William put it. Arthur was not present to welcome his brother, however, having prudently returned to Massachusetts for a suitable wife to share his western venture.[4]

Accompanied by John, William enthusiastically explored the prairie, with its marvelous stretches of flat lands covered by tall grasses and myriad wild flowers. Soon after his arrival, he and his brother set out on horseback toward Springfield and rode about a hundred miles over vast prairies with scattered settlements near wooded groves and rivers. Bryant found the countryside to be "the most salubrious" and fertile he had ever seen; "at the same time," he added, "I do not think it beautiful. Some of the views, however, from the highest parts of the prairie are what, I have no doubt, some would call beautiful in the highest degree. . . ." Perhaps he was thinking of these when he wrote the opening lines of "The Painted Cup":

> The fresh savannas of the Sangamon
> Here rise in gentle swells, and the long grass
> Is mixed with rustling hazels.[5]

In his letters Bryant was also candid about the people and the towns he saw. About thirty-five miles from Jacksonville, he and his brother stopped at the federal land office in Springfield to learn whether any land was available. He found the houses there "not so good" as those of Jacksonville, "and the whole town having an appearance of dirt and discomfort." After spending the night in a "filthy tavern," he and his brother rode north for several days, Bryant himself considering the purchase of a quarter section of land not far from Pekin. Once, at nightfall, the travelers found themselves on the edge of an empty stretch of prairie fifteen miles wide and sought lodging in the only habitation available, a one-room cabin. They found a man sick with fever, a half-dozen or more children, "brown with dirt," and several other travelers. The harried woman of the household gave them food about ten o'clock, and they slept on the floor—twenty men, women, and children in the same



Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons from William Cullen Bryant, *by Charles H. Brown.*

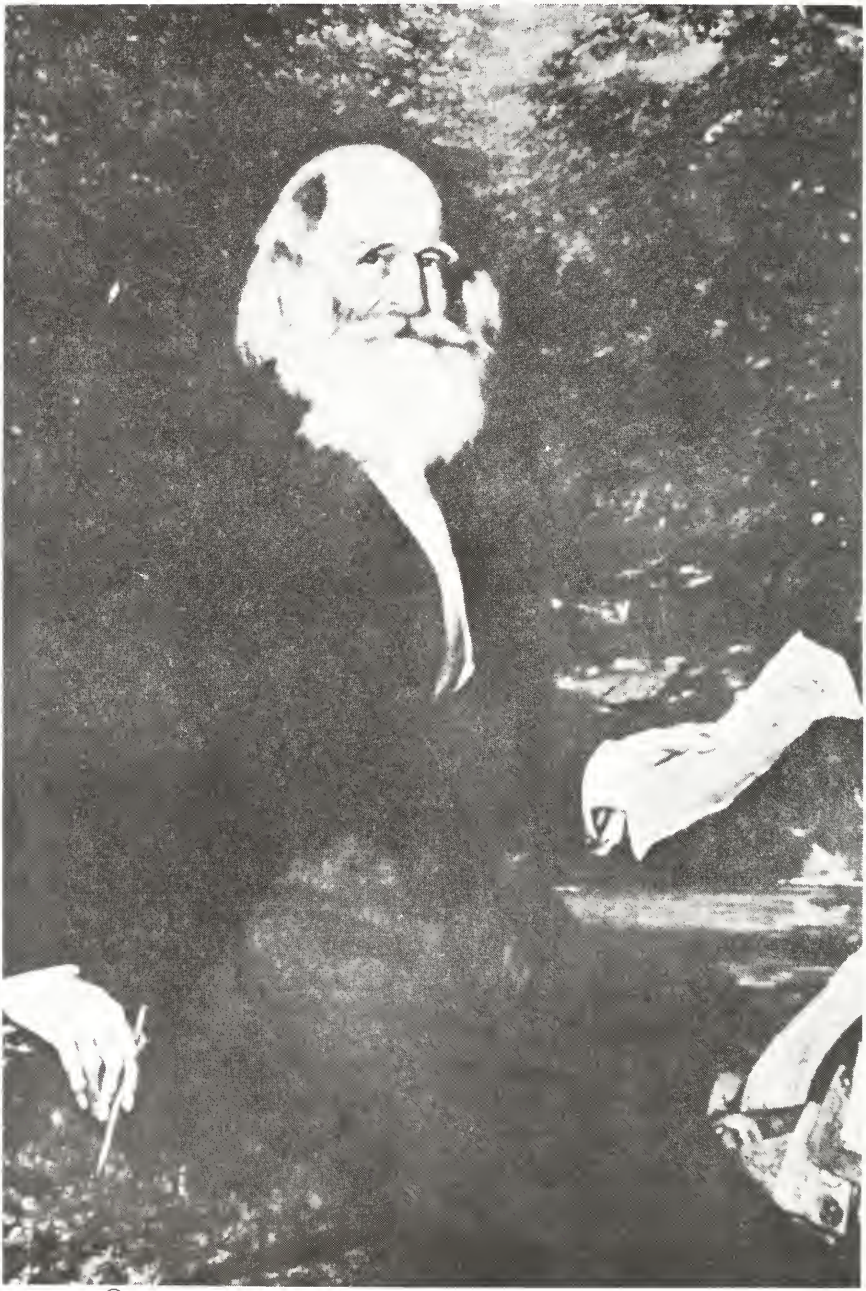
Bryant at the age of thirty. Painting by Samuel F. B. Morse.

room. At another cabin Bryant asked for corn for the horses and saw "a fat dusky-looking woman, barefoot, with six children as dirty as pigs and shaggy as bears. She was cleansing one of them and cracking certain unfortunate insects between her thumb-nails. I was very glad when she told me she had no corn nor oats." Shortly thereafter, however, they spotted a clean-faced youngster and, pursuing that sign of civilization, found hospitality to their liking, even though the woman had but one spoon with which to serve them and that with only half a handle.

On the return to Jacksonville, Bryant encountered one of the thirty-day companies called up in the Black Hawk campaign, which introduced him to "a hardlooking set of men" who were "unkept and unshaved, wearing shirts of dark calico, and sometimes calico capotes." The captain of the company was a lanky young man who amused Bryant with his clever talk and frontier wit. Years later, Bryant learned that the young man he had met that day was Abraham Lincoln, whom he would memorialize in 1865 as "slow to smite, and swift to spare,/ Gentle and merciful and just!"[6]

The day after Arthur returned from Massachusetts with his new wife, Bryant left for New York by the river route, concluding one of his letters with the remark that his experience must be treated in "the only form of expression in which it can be properly uttered." That form was implicit in a letter he wrote in October: "These prairies, of a soft, fertile garden soil, and a smooth undulating surface, on which you may put a horse to full speed, covered with high thinly growing grass, full of weeds and gaudy flowers, and destitute of bushes or trees, perpetually brought to my mind the idea of their having once been cultivated."[7]

Bryant's supposition that the prairies were gardens in antiquity led him to use the agrarian myth, which informs the entire poem. As Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx have shown, the American pastoral myth is a significant mode of belief in which the landscape, particularly the Middle West, has long been viewed as a kind of garden, an idealized middle ground of nature and art, lying midway between the primitive forest and populous city.[8] "We are a people of cultivators . . . united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, be-



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William Cullen Bryant. Painting by Frank Buchser, 1868.

cause they are equitable," Crèvecoeur wrote in the eighteenth century.[9] And, as Marx summarizes it, LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN FARMER is a classic illustration of the myth: "Instead of Arcadia, we have the wild yet potentially bucolic terrain of the North American continent; instead of the shepherd, the independent, democratic husbandman with his plausible 'rural scheme'; instead of the language of a decadent pastoral poetry, the exuberant idiom, verging toward the colloquial, of the farmer. . . ."[10] The most notable political advocate of the myth was Thomas Jefferson, in whose NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA the familiar defense of the agrarian society is found: "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue."[11]

Many of the settlers who came to Illinois were deeply conscious of their roles in creating a new society on the fertile land, and the Bryants were no doubt among them. In the presence of so persistent an American belief, it is not surprising that Bryant's Illinois experience is assimilated into it. The opening lines of "The Prairies" establish his use of the myth:

> These are the gardens of the Desert, these
> The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
> For which the speech of England has no name—
> The Prairies.[12]

Having announced his pastoral theme, Bryant then relates how the Creator himself prepared a sublime setting for those who will cultivate the prairies:

> The hand that built the firmament hath heaved
> And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their slopes
> With herbage, planted them with island-groves,
> And hedged them round with forests. (ll. 25-28)

Such natural gardens for a chosen people are "Fitting floor/ For this magnificent temple of the sky" (ll. 28-29), where the flowers below "rival the constellations," and the heavens bend down upon the earth in love. The hoofbeats of the horse create a "sacrilegious sound," disturbing the "dead of other days" who built great mounds overlooking the Mississippi and "in the dim forests crowded with old oaks" (l. 44).

Although Bryant is not explicit, the ancient inhabitants of the

prairie are clearly analogous to the Arcadians of old and were "a disciplined and populous race" that built the mounds while the Greeks were yet quarrying marble to build the Parthenon (ll. 46-50). Like shepherds of the Golden Age they were rewarded for their artful affinity with nature:

> These ample fields
> Nourished their harvests, here their herds were fed,
> When haply by their stalls the bison lowed,
> And bowed his maned shoulder to the yoke. (ll. 50-53)

A race so skilled in the agrarian arts that it domesticated the buffalo might well be expected to excel in the other pastoral arts of love and poetry, as indeed it did:

> . . . and lovers walked, and wooed
> In a forgotten language, and old tunes,
> From instruments of unremembered form,
> Gave the soft winds a voice. (ll. 55-58)

Implicitly, the gardens of the desert are the physical and spiritual legacy bequeathed by that happy people to western settlers. Et in Arcadia ego, or in nineteenth-century terms, "thus change the forms of being" (l. 86). The civilization of Mound Builders was destroyed, Bryant relates, by the invasion of hunter-tribes, which signify the force of primitivism impinging upon the garden. With one exception, the peaceful cultivators were slaughtered as the prairie fell under the dominion of the red men.

The treatment of the Mound Builders and red men as two distinct races undergirds Bryant's use of the pastoral myth, with its counterforce of primitivism, and derives from another nineteenth-century belief generally discarded today.[13] In a popular history which Bryant collaborated in writing in 1876, a full chapter is devoted to the Mound Builders, who are described as a shadowy people "of a singular degree of civilization" antedating the Indians found here by discoverers from the old world.[14] It was they who built "the mighty mounds/ That overlook the river" (ll. 42-43), which Bryant had seen at St. Louis and which are regarded today as the relics of the Mississippian Indian culture. As for contemporary tribes, the comment in the history reflects a popular misconception that Bryant wrote or allowed to stand, at least, through editorial prerogative: "It seems irrational to assume that such a people, whose contact for two centuries and a half with the culture of

another race has been unproductive of any good, can have once fallen from a semi-civilization possessed by their ancestors, but of which they have neither distinct inheritance nor even dim tradition."[15]

The force of primitivism, epitomized by the "red man" in the poem, does not itself escape the mutability of being nor perhaps the gentle breezes of the garden landscape. According to Bryant's account, "hunter-tribes, warlike and fierce," savagely destroyed the peaceful civilization of Mound Builders. After the plain had been heaped with corpses and all but one slain, that lone survivor returned to the captured stronghold in despair, expecting nothing better than death:

> Man's better nature triumphed then. Kind words
> Welcomed and soothed him; the rude conquerors
> Seated the captive with their chiefs; he chose
> A bride among their maidens, and at length
> Seemed to forget—yet ne'er forgot. . . . (ll. 79-83)

The recent conflict between whites and Indians in Illinois is completely absent from the poem. The explanation given for the Indians' departure is that the forms of being change and

> The red man, too,
> Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so long,
> And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought
> A wilder hunting-ground. (ll. 89-92)

Although the prairies have been the scene of earlier conflict and sorrow, they remain untainted. The poem concludes with a description of a natural garden in which men may live in perfect harmony. The birds have scarcely "learned the fear of man," and the "sliding reptiles of the ground,/ [are] Startlingly beautiful" (ll. 106-08). For the moment, it seems inevitable that humanity will fulfill here in this new Eden its old Utopian dream. Actual conditions that Bryant had seen are relegated to the prose; no Martin Chuzzlewit will suffer the ague in these surroundings.[16]

Now, as the poet's horse moves over the prairie, in a bucolic and prophetic reverie, Bryant envisions an advancing multitude to build anew on the foundations of that earlier race of gardeners. Listening long to the "domestic hum" of the bee, the poet hearkens to still another sound:

> From the ground
> Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
> Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
> Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
> Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain
> Over the dark brown furrows. (ll. 117-22)

Destined to build new lives on prairies across the continent, the colonists will doubtlessly be as skilled as their predecessors in the agrarian and aeolian arts. Their virtue will be that of the child, the maiden, and the Sabbath worshipper.

The reports of travelers and of pioneers who settled the prairies—at first near the timber groves and later on the open plain—leave no doubt of the sublimity of the virgin landscape and its capacity to inspire hope. In fact, Bryant poeticizes a thought expressed more than once in accounts by early settlers of Illinois:

> I behold [the prairies] for the first,
> And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
> Takes in the encircling vastness. (ll. 4-6)

In "the sound of that advancing multitude" (l. 116) near the end of the poem, Bryant evokes a nationalistic theme that received stronger affirmation in years following 1833 and fuller poetical expression with Whitman, whose "western youth" of "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" carry on the work of progress and regeneration when older races droop with weariness:

> All the past we leave behind,
> We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
> Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
> Pioneers! O pioneers! [17]

Eventually, as Marx points out, the American concept of progress made it imperative to introduce the machine into the garden, while the myth was assimilated into a literature of the "technologically sublime."[18] Thus, through technology, Whitman's pioneers are enabled to transcend time and space in their spiritual passage to India and return

> To reason's early paradise,
> Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
> Again with fair creation.[19]

By treating the prairies as gardens and the Mound Builders as Arcadians, Bryant, like Whitman, defines the nation's destiny in the context of a golden age and reveals the significance of the

western myth to America's spiritual quest. In reality, of course, neither metropolitan corruption nor primitive anarchy were excluded from the garden. With the machine came the industrial city—big business, crowded tenements, and political dishonesty—and in the removal of the Indians beyond the Mississippi, white settlers demonstrated their own savagery; but for a poet of the nation's spirit and geography the myth of the garden was a promising and powerful theme.

NOTES

[1]William Cullen Bryant, "Illinois Fifty Years Ago," in PROSE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, ed. Parke Godwin (1884; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), II, 3-22. Unless otherwise indicated, Bryant's quoted comments about Illinois are taken from this synthesis of private letters.

[2]Charles H. Brown. WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT (New York: Scribner's, 1971), pp. 204-05.

[3]Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Introduction: Prelude to Disaster," in THE BLACK HAWK WAR: 1831-1832, ed. Ellen M. Whitney (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1970), I, 50-51. According to Mrs. Whitney's estimates, the war resulted in casualties of between 442 and 592 members of Black Hawk's band and 72 whites.

[4]Brown, p. 205.

[5]THE POETICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, Roslyn edition, ed. Henry C. Sturges and Richard Henry Stoddard (1903; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 196.

[6]POETICAL WORKS, pp. 316-17. The poem of four stanzas was written for services in New York following Lincoln's assassination.

[7]Parke Godwin, A BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE (New York: Appleton, 1883), I, 286.

[8]Henry Nash Smith, "The Garden of the World and American Agrarianism," in VIRGIN LAND: THE AMERICAN WEST AS SYMBOL AND MYTH (New York: Vintage, 1950), pp. 138-40. Leo Marx, THE MACHINE IN THE GARDEN: TECHNOLOGY AND THE PASTORAL IDEAL (1964; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 36-40.

[9]St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN FARMER, Letter III, in THE AMERICAN TRADITION IN LITERATURE, 4th ed., ed. Sculley Bradley et al. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1974), I, 182.

[10]Marx, p. 114.

[11]Query XIX, in THE COMPLETE JEFFERSON, ed. Saul K. Padover (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), p. 678.

[12]POETICAL WORKS, pp. 130-33. Lines from this edition are indicated in the text.

[13]Operations at the Koster Site, an archaeological project on the Illinois River near Kampsville, Illinois, have revealed evidence of Indian villages dating back at least 8,500 years and are expected to indicate the presence of Indians in the area before that.

[14]William Cullen Bryant and Sydney Howard Gay, A POPULAR HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES FROM THE FIRST DISCOVERY OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE BY THE NORTHMEN, TO THE END OF THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE UNION OF THE STATES (New York: Scribner's, 1878), I, 20.

[15]Bryant and Gay, p. 19.

[16]Charles Dickens visited America in 1842 and two years later wrote MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT, in which he described a dilapidated log-cabin town called Eden built on a swampy piece of the American frontier. Chuzzlewit became an investor but after nearly dying of a fever was happy enough just to escape.

[17]LEAVES OF GRASS AND SELECTED PROSE, ed. Sculley Bradley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 193.

[18]Marx, pp. 219-21.

[19]"Passage to India," in LEAVES, p. 344.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN ILLINOIS WOMAN

Mark E. Nackman and Darryl K. Paton

This is the memoir of a woman whose life straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Born in 1848, she waited 89 years before recording her family's history during the month of January, 1938. There is nothing remarkable about any of the family members, save her grandfather's brother, Samuel F. B. Morse, and the events of their lives appear so unspectacular as to hardly require memorializing. Yet her account is compelling. With openness, warmth, and unflagging spirit, she tells what she remembers, and in this story of an ordinary American family over five generations, a universal chord is struck. Here is a daughter and sister, a wife and mother, in her various stages and roles as the years flash by. So concentrated is her focus on her family that she fails to mention the name of only one person: herself.

Emma Morse Loomis was the second child and daughter of Charles and Abigail Morse, who were living in Wilton, Maine when she was born on November 8, 1848. She spent her childhood and teens in Waterville, where she attended a private school for girls with her two sisters, Mattie and Hattie. A brother, Charles, the last child, was born in 1859. These were the blissful years of youth, and she recalls with avidity the games and amusements and pastimes of a Maine girlhood. A detailed description of her father's seven-bedroom house, purchased on a railroad ticket agent's salary, reminds us today that the American standard of living may have regressed, in some aspects, from Victorian times. History has already had its say by mid-century, as she notes the abandoned water-powered cotton mills on the Kennebec and the passing of the Indian frontier, where an aging block house stands as a monument. The Civil War, however, seems to have made no impression; at

Courtesy of the authors.

The "Illinois Woman": Emma Morse Loomis.

least it merits no mention and apparently disturbed Waterville not at all. But carefree times are forever at an end when her father must seek new employment. He looks to the "growing West" for work and finds it in Illinois, on the Chicago & Alton Railroad. The family moves to Jacksonville in 1866.

For the 72 years that will follow, our narrator remains in Illinois. Here she completes her schooling in 1869 at the Female Academy in Jacksonville, and here she meets John Loomis, whom she marries in 1873. Here she rears their five children and provides a nesting place for them, their spouses, and her grandchildren during the entire 45 years of her marriage. Outside happenings scarcely impinge upon their lives; she gives only passing notice to such landmark events of national and world history as the Philadelphia Centennial and the 1918 influenza epidemic. Hers is a world of familial relationships which transcend, on the individual's level, the large events that historians are prone to highlight. The value of the memoir is in its revelation of the commonplace and in the very timelessness of its subject.

Yet a picture of middle class society in post-Civil War America emerges, and it is not a pretty one. In these years of explosive economic growth, America appears to be something less than the land of opportunity, even for native-born whites. Jobs are hard to come by, and job insecurity and instability is endemic. The self-made man does not exist in this family. From the experiences of father Morse and husband Loomis, as well as the third generation of sons and sons-in-law, it seems that joblessness must often be remedied by a well-placed friend or relative.

Employment possibilities are not limited by immobility. Family members are only too ready to leave the hearth in search of work (or health) and we find them ranging the full breadth of the United States, from New York to California and back again to Illinois. Geographic mobility is at least matched by frequent intra-state residential movement, but without any accompanying change in status. The surprising habit of renting houses or rooms is symptomatic of chronic instability and financial inability. This may explain the practice of "doubling up," even in the cramped quarters of a boarding house, as the sons and daughters, with their children in tow, come home at intervals to stay with father and mother Loomis.

An extended family it has become by 1900, but the parents are never deserted. If anything, their grown children still betray a dependence in time of need. And they are always welcome to live at home, along with their spouses and children, even for years at a time. From this account it appears that the American family was not irretrievably splintered by national expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that the isolated nuclear family of the post-World War II era may be a product of unemployment compensation, pension plans, and social security.

This handwritten memoir was recorded in two blue Spiral No. 87 composition books, which came into the possession of a grandson-in-law, Howard Mollestad. They were discovered in 1977 by Darryl K. Paton, a student at the University of Washington, who was helping Mr. Mollestad clean out and close down his house. Mr. Paton brought the notebooks to the attention of his history professor, Mark E. Nackman, and then secured the written permission of Mr. Mollestad to have the contents published. The editing has involved transposition of paragraphs and sentences, as indicated by ellipses, and minor alteration of punctuation to improve readability. The editors of WESTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL STUDIES abridged the manuscript to concentrate on matters dealing only with the region.

1938

This is the 8th day of Jan. 1938. I am 89 years old. While my mind is clear and my eyesight good, for which I thank God, I am going to write my family history for my dear children and grandchildren. It is all I have to leave them for a legacy.

The Morse Family

My Grandfather, Charles Morse, was born in Maine in the year May 27, 1785. He lived in the town of Wilton. He was quite a prominent man in that village and owned some property there. He was

twice married. After the death of his first wife he married Abigail Scales: they had three sons, Samuel, Charles Moody, and Moses Leland. Charles Moody was my father.

. . . . . .

My father was not a college graduate as was his brother Leland but he attended an Academy which was probably about the grade of our present day High School. In his "teens" he went to Augusta, Maine and clerked in the Post Office. My mother Elizabeth Bickford was living there at the time. Father was born July 21, 1820, my mother Nov. 16, 1820. In August, 1841, they were married. They left Augusta and went to Wilton where they lived with his parents. Not till May, 1844, was their first child born, my sister Martha. After I was born Nov. 8th, 1848, they moved from Wilton to Skowhegan where another sister ["Hattie"] was born on Oct. 8, 1850. ["Mattie"] was a little over a year old grandfather passed away. The next move was to Waterville, a college town on the Kennebec river. Father's position there was a ticket agent in the office of the Maine Central R. R.

. . . . . .

During our last year in Waterville father acted as Supt. of the R. R. The reason of it was that the Supt. had disappeared: He was found in Canada, brought to New York and put in the Tombs. He had been caught stealing from the R. R. After a trial he was free, and for what reason I don't know, he was reinstated in the Co. and had his Supt. office given back to him. My father was expected to resume his same office under him; but no, my father refused to work under a man of that character, so he resigned.

About that time there was oil discovered in Canada. Father went there hoping he might be lucky enough to strike "ile"; he was not successful and came back home. His brother Samuel was living in Wis. He had been connected with the R. R. a long time as engineer and conductor. Father went west thinking he might find a position in the growing West. Through the influence of friends he obtained a position on the Chicago and Alton R.R. as division Supt. on a branch that ran to and, later beyond, Jacksonville. He came back to Waterville, sold his property, pac [sic] out household

goods, shipped them to Jacksonville, Illinois and we embarked for a new home in the West. Our route was by the way of Canada; we stopped off a day in Montreal, then on to Chicago and down to Jacksonville.

We stayed in a hotel until a house was found and made ready for occupation. The last family who had lived in this house were very poor housekeepers. They had left much to be done before my tidy neat mother would live in it; plenty of soap and water and fresh paint and vermin to be exterminated: rats, mice, and bugs! Jacksonville was a college town; this house was on the college campus. It was formerly a dormitory; part had been burned and the rest arranged for a family residence. There was a basement; in it was the dining room, kitchen and a servants sleeping room. (Mother didn't think it a fit sleeping place so she had the servant use a room in the attic.) The first floor had double parlors and a hall, upstairs three bedrooms and two finished attic rooms. I forgot, there was also a bedroom off the back parlor at the end of the hall. It was Sept., 1866, when we landed in Jacksonville and many years passed before the last of the family left there for homes in different states. Some still in Illinois, in Penn. and some in Alabama.

There was three schools for girls in Jacksonville. The Atheneum, Female Academy, Methodist College. The latter is still used and is now called McMurray College. Hattie and I attended the Atheneum first year, then we went to the Acadamy from where we were graduated, June, 1869. I studied music, both instrumental and vocal. Hattie took drawing and painting. One of the pictures was the head of the Madonna. It was quite a large picture and in later years she used to smile and say the work on it was so much of her teacher's touching up that she felt it was not her work and she ought not get the credit of it. At the commencement graduating exercises each girl stood up and read her own composition. It was discovered sometime after that the valedictorean [sic] had copied hers from some former graduate. She had more courage than the rest of—no, had to brazen the face of the audience with a lie. The rest of us may not have been credited with much nor any literary talent but our effusions were at least honest! There was music on the program furnished by the music pupils of the school. I played with three other girls a selection on two

pianos. The following year I sang an aria from some opera, some nerve that. It was not my selection by my teacher's. She must have thought and felt confident that I'd get through without failing and that would show her ability as a vocal teacher.

After leaving school I was governess to three little girls in their country home. Their mother preferred that way, did not like to send them to the country school. Their father was a dealer in cattle; he was called a "cattle King" as he raised large herds of beef and fattened them on his many acres of grassland for shipment to the eastern markets. He owned a comfortable home on one of his pastures. It was a short distance from Jacksonville by rail. The station where the train stopped was named for this man Alexander. I was recommended to the mother of these little girls—8, 10, 12—by my profesor [sic] of the Academy. I taught there two years. I used to go home week ends about every two or three weeks. There were two boys in the family about 16 and 18. One of them would drive me to the station Friday evening and when I returned Monday morning I was met by a carriage and a saddled horse. I had learned to ride horseback in the country and old "Ben" was a safe horse for an amateur to ride. The road was across the front [of] the depot to the house. There were no cattle in the pasture when I had to cross it. The little girls had ponies so we had many rides together around the country. They were dear little girls and their mother was so kind to me that I enjoyed my two years with them.

While I was teaching in Alexander, Hattie was giving music lessons in another country town of the R. R. and Hattie had a few pupils in drawing. All this after we had left the house on the campus and now lived in town where we were nearer all were engaged in. . . .

While Hattie and I were in the Academy, Mattie, when she was about 20, went to a boarding school in Worcester, Mass. The proprietors were a Dr. Pattison and his wife. He was formerly the president of Waterville College. (This College was not co-educational then; it is now and is called Colby University.) Mattie was in that school two years. Her roommate the second year was a girl from New Rochelle, N.Y. Her name was Essie Davids. During the vacation she visited Essie in her home; she met her brother Ed. After a few months they became engaged, and he followed us to

Jacksonville. He boarded and lived with us. Our house was in the west end of the city; the R. R. office where father worked was in the extreme eastern end so it was a long walk between home and business. Father had given Ed a position in his office. Our friends and acquaintances were among the families of the college faculty and church. It was not a gay crowd and Mr. Ed wanted livlier [sic] evenings than these people could produce so he moved nearer the center of the city. He came out to see his sweetheart often at first but soon became intimate with the city men and girls and his visits were fewer and far between till Mattie's eyes were opened and she realized that she was no longer "all in all" to him. She broke her engagement and he left for New York. . . .

My sister Mattie, after her engagement was broken, had many friends among the young men and girls in town and she was well liked and included in all their social life. She still kept up her painting and joined a class conducted by a professor in art who taught in the Academy. He had outside pupils besides the inside pupils. He was the son of the former President of Waterville College who conducted the boarding school in Worcester, Mass. where Mattie was one time a student. He had been abroad for several years studying in Paris and other art centers; his name was James Wm. Pattison. After he left Jacksonville he lived in Chicago and was connected with the Art Institute there. Mattie, besides being a pupil also assisted him with the younger members of his class. My sister carved on wood one piece of her work she did for her brother [Charles]. It was a bookcase and writing shelf combined: there is a long shelf at top and bottom, narrow ones at one side and on the other the writing compartment, pigeon holes and small drawer; a door which let down by small chains to support it forms a space for writing. She carved a design on each of the long panels and quite an elaborate one on the door, also the words as follows: "A few friends and many books both true." This case is in this house, a part of the family heirlooms which fell to me after the death of all my family.

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There was a young lawyer in town who was fond of drama: he formed a club of amateur players. I was one of them; Mattie and John [Loomis] and most of our crowd belonged. We put on several

plays, not very difficult at first. This man was so enthused with his hobby that he decided he [would] try one of Shakespeare's plays. He chose THE MERCHANT OF VENICE; he took the part of Shylock. I was not cast in that, but played leading lady in one or two other plays. No more of Shakespeare's were attempted. The people enjoyed our performances as the house was well filled whenever we put on a play. There was a very good opera house with a stage equipped with scenery where we performed. I think we all enjoyed that winter. I know I did and did not find it hard to learn the parts I was assigned.

Sol Smith Russel was an actor on the real stage, a professional. His home was in Jacksonville; he came home for visits with his family at times. On one occasion he was urged by his friends to put on our stage one of his repertoires. He consented but had to have assistants selected from our club. He chose a play that did not require many actors. I was one he chose, among others. I was rather dubious about appearing on the stage with a noted actor but as I was not the only one I concluded I'd not be very conspicuous and agreed to take part. The morning of the evening selected for the play I awoke with a sick headache. I was subjected to them for many years when I was young. By keeping quiet and dosing remedies I was relieved by night and ready to do my part, altho' rather weak and shakey; but I got through the performance without showing what the day had been for me. Mr. Smith congratulated me and thanked me for assisting him to make his play a success.

This was my last winter as a care-free maiden. John and I decided to be married: he was 30 and I 24. We chose May 8th, 1873 as our wedding day. We were married at home, the house was small so we could invite but a few of our most intimate friends. We would have liked to invite all of the young folks we had had so much good times with the past winter. The wedding was in the evening: my dress was white organdy with a train. I wore a tulle veil which reached to the bottom of my train. This was the age when women's dresses were elaborate with flounces, ruffles, puffs, tucks and bows. It required many yards of the lighter weight materials to make a dress; but the dressmakers had enough sense to leave the heavy brocades, satins and silks without all these furbelows; and our undergarments were made of muslin and cambric

(cotton cloth, full petticoats—no slips—drawers below the knee, chemises and corset covers). When I see my grandchildren dress in their short shorts, slips, and brassiers made of soft dainty colored silk and simply made dresses I wonder how the women and girls of the 1800's survived under the lbs. of clothing we wore.

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The year 1876 was centennial year celebrated in Philadelphia. Father and Mattie went; mother could have gone but she would not leave me as another baby was expected that month, August. She felt she must be with me and take care of George [our first-born]: he was two years and 5 months old when Leland was born on the 27th of Aug.

For nine years my mother was kept busy watching her grand babies come into the world. My sister Hattie was married the year after I was: her wedding day was in June. Her babies came every two years as mine did. The last one before mother died was my little boy who lived but one day. A month before John was two years old I was not well, sort of run down and depressed. Mother said I needed a rest and change. She took George, Bess and John and grandmother Loomis took Leland ([grand] father Loomis was teaching in the town of Virginia near Jacksonville). I went to St. Louis where my brother [Charles] was living at that time. I took the Swedish movement cure. It consisted of machinery which rolled, and massaged all parts of the body. I suppose it was to stir up the blood and slugish [sic] muscles. I was there six weeks and took the cure every day. It did help me, that and the complete rest from care, and when I went home I felt able to take up my duties again.

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When Leland was nearly one year old my husband had to give up his position in the bank where he had been employed since before we were married. The son or nephew [of] some director of the bank needed a position so one of the clerks had to retire to make room for him; and it was my husband who had to step out! Now to find another bread-earning job to be sought. A new Post Master had just been appointed; John knew him well and applied for a clerkship in the office; he was given a place; the salary was very small but

"beggars" can't be choosers so he was glad to take it instead of being idle, while keeping his eyes open for something more re-miniative [sic]!

We could not keep house, pay rent and keep up with the cost of living, so we broke up and went to board in one room in a large house with a woman we knew, who rented this property and was keeping boarders. The room we had was one of the parlors; we took the back one as it had a southern exposure and a fireplace which made it very cheerful. We furnished it ourselves; and to help out our board we allowed our landlady to have the use of our cow, also our dining room table and chairs and a small cottage set of furniture—bedroom—which mother gave me. We lived there a year and a few months. John was on the look out for a position that would give him a salary large enough for us to rent a house and keep house again. A friend of John's was running for county clerk. He told him that if he was elected he'd appoint him deputy. He won and we felt we could live on the salary he'd receive, so we rented a five room cottage and moved in.

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After the twelve years in this house John had to seek another job as a change in administration occurred and he must leave the Court house. My brother Charles and John's brother were both living in the West, Charles Morse in Kansas City, and Charles Loomis in Omaha where he was in partnership in the dry goods business. John took a trip to both cities hoping he might find something to do there; nothing doing so back he came to old Illinois. He had [a] friend in politics—a young man [Richard Yates] who was later the Gov. of Illinois—whose influence was enough to secure a political job in the Revenue service as Rev. collector for the two distilliries [sic] in Pekin. His work required his presence right away in that city; he went but did not take his family with him at first. . . . When John went West to seek for work my father said I'd better come with our 5 children and live with him and Mattie and save paying rent until we had to go to Pekin. I did not feel right to bring so many into their quiet life, but he insisted and we moved in on them bag and baggage, where we lived 4 years until John felt he had a permanent position and we could get settled again in home making. . . .

At the end of our living four years with father and Mattie we moved to Pekin. We lived in a big house across from the distillery where John's office was. It was too large for us; it needed a lot furniture to make it homelike and we had not enough. The kitchen was immense and it seemed a mile from the cookstove to the dining room. I think father [John] was satisfied with it as he was happy to have his family with him again. But Bess and I were lonesome; it was too far from town for us to have neighbors and we were strangers. John was in high school and walked in every day; it was too far for Emma, altho' she was just the age to begin. Bess didn't want to enter a strange school to finish her last [year?] so she stayed at home and helped me.

Before we went to live with father and Mattie, George left school. He was in the preparatory school for the college. He felt he ought to be earning money to help pay expenses. He got a minor position in one of the banks. Within two years after we were living in father's home he became very unhappy; the bookkeeper under whom he worked in the bank was very indifferent and didn't assist him as he might have done as this was new work for him. George was very sensitive and it hurt him; that and with worrying over our situation (he felt we must be a burden on father and Mattie altho' they didn't feel so) made him despondent. One gloomy dreary day in Feb. he left the house for the bank feeling terribly blue. He was the first one to arrive after the janitor. For an instant he lost his mind, and didn't realize the sorrow he'd bring to his family, nor the wrong he was about to do. He saw a pistol on the desk and used it! He shot himself in the head! He must have been insane just then. Poor boy, only eighteen. O, if someone had come in before he touched that pistol he would have been saved. He was burried [sic] beside his grandmother [Morse] and baby brother in the cemetery at Jacksonville. There was left our beloved son and brother. He had been our pride and hope, for he had always been thoughtful of his parents and would not do such a dreadful act when he was himself. . . .

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Father had reached the age when he could retire from business activity: he received a pension from the R. R. where he had been Supt. so long. After we moved to Pekin he and Mattie gave up the

house they were living in and rented a few rooms in a friend's home and did light housekeeping. They lived that way a year or two then Charles [who had moved from Kansas City] wanted them to come to Philadelphia and live with him. They broke up the light housekeeping, shipped the household goods to Philadelphia and spent the summer with us in Pekin before they left for the home which was the last one for all three of them. I don't recall just how many years they lived there before father died; he was 81. They brought his body to Jacksonville where he was buried. Charles and Mattie went back to Philadelphia and within a year she died and Charles had to bring her body to be buried beside her father and mother. Charles never married.

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The first winter we lived in Pekin on New Years day it was very cold; the river had frozen solid so Bess and John decided to go skating. It had snowed and then thawed furiously so the ice was not clear. As they were skating towards town planning to go as far as the bridge and then back, they came to an air-hole, but not realizing in time what it was they both fell in. The ice around it was strong so John managed to climb out still holding on to Bess and succeeded in pulling her out in spite of her heavy clothes. They were frightened, almost speechless, they got to shore at last, and of course their clothes froze, which caused them difficulty in walking and they couldn't help laughing altho' they had just escaped an awful death. They reached the house and came in the room where I sat reading and said "we fell in the river." I did not at first grasp what they meant. As soon as I did, it dawned on me what a narrow escape they had had. I was so shocked that I came near fainting. If that accident had been fatal how different would have been my life; but God was good to us; the lives of those two children were spared to be a comfort to us for many years After the tragic death of our oldest son we were not asked to suffer another. For years the thought of what might have been made me shudder.

Leland worked in the distillery for a few months then went to Chicago where his uncle Sam Loomis lived. He got a position there in a meat market. His uncle had married a French girl whose father was a photographer and Sam worked with him. Through them

Leland met her sister; they fell in love and were married. They were too young and he was not earning enough to support a family, and after the baby came they had a hard time to meet expenses, and the baby was not getting enough nourishment. So John wrote them to come home to us. He got work again in the distillery and they lived with us. We called a Dr. to examine the baby and he told us what to do for her; we were to rub her daily with warm olive oil and give her good rich milk. We followed directions and the baby soon began to show the results, and grew plump and pretty as she should look. They remained with us and Leland wanted to be back in Chicago again; then another daughter was born. After a few years in Chicago they moved to Trenton, N. J., and finally to Brooklyn where Leland had a small meat market. He and Sara disagreed and finally separated; she took the two little girls and went back to Chicago where her relatives lived.

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As soon as we moved in town from the distillery Emma entered school; she was way behind girls her age as she had never been to school. She was 9 yrs. She learned rapidly and was soon promoted and in two years had caught up with her class. She went three years to the High School and instead of going back to finish the 4th yr. she began the study of music, both instrumental and vocal.

Our new home was in a neighborhood of people who owned fine, comfortable homes, quite a distance from the business center of the city. . . . We lived about five years in this house; father had bought a horse and cow when we moved to this place. . . . Our nearest neighbor was a German family named Friederich. One son [Walter] was Bess' age; he was living at home at the time we moved. He soon became very friendly with our children. Walter's father was formerly sheriff but now retired from active service as he was in poor health. He was a prisoner in Libby Prison during the Civil war; that was enough to ruin any man's health. Walter had a cousin living in New York. He went there shortly after we became acquainted with the family. One day Mr. Friederich was sitting in the Court House lawn talking and joking with friends when he suddenly put his hand over his heart and exclaimed, "My God," and died instantly. Walter came home to be with his mother and aunt, his mother's sister who lived with her. . . . After Mr. Friederich's death Bess and Walter became engaged.

The man we rented this place from wanted it himself so we must move again. We rented a small house down town; after a year Bess and Walter were married. Walter's aunt Mrs. Frings owned a little house of five rooms and bath. They rented this and began housekeeping. Within two years a baby came. Bess was dreadfully sick during the birth and when the baby was born it was dead; she was a very large, beautiful child. She almost caused her mother to die: only the quick attention of the nurse saved her. Bess never had another child. Her sister Emma's children were especially dear to her as she loved them so much.

When they were married Walter had an electrical stove; he was an excellent electrician. After a few years he gave up his shop and they stored their furniture and went to New York City. Walter ventured several things but did not find any that he could or cared to make permanent. He was interested in slight-of-hand magic, he had read considerable about it and privately experienced some in it.

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The movies were beginning to start so Walter was in for that, something new again! He rented a room and began showing pictures; he was successful from the start and when the time was ready for another change he had bought the building he now exhibited in. It was a large building, formerly the town hall where all the out-of-town and home shows were given. He sold the house and business to a woman who owned another movie house. Soon after Mr. Friederich's death his wife and her sister moved into the cottage where Bess and Walter began housekeeping. Mrs. Friederich sold her property. After her death Walter fell heir to all the property. He now had a good income so he and Bess could live without having to be tied down to steady work. . . .

When Walter and Bess came back from New York he bought a car; he made two or three changes before he got the one he owned when he died and which came to Emma in his will. The last was a 7-passenger Buick, that seemed a large car for four people. He said he wanted one roomy enough to bring the whole Crumbaker family [Emma, Ed, and their five children] to Pekin when they could come. Ed had not yet bought a car; he got one later on. We all loved to have this family with us as often as possible. Bess and Walter loved

to do things for them and was [sic] very fond of Emma's children. . . .

Soon after Ed and Emma moved to Abingdon we moved to a house across the street. It was a two story house; it was for sale and considered a good bargain. Father was advised to buy it. He had no money to buy it at once but terms for payment were made easy so he took it. We moved in the month of May and were not thoroughly settled when poor sick Leland and his family came. I have already written of his sickness and death that summer [1917]. Father had not been well for some time; he had sinking spells when he [would] fall unconscious. The Dr. who examined him said he had hardening of the arteries. He had to give up working in the fall after Leland's death and on January 15th, 1918, he died.

Walter assumed the payments on the property and all was transferred to him. I was to have a home there as long as I lived; now all is gone, the two children dead and the house burned to the ground. I am here with Emma and John [my son] alone in Pekin. So we four—Walter, Bess, John, and I—were settled in a permanent home; we lived there 15 years until Bess died. That made another change in our lives. . . .

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In the year 1918 a Co. of Home Guards was formed in Pekin. Walter was elected Capt., John a private. One night in the summer they were called, awakened from sleep, by telephone to come on duty immediately as there had been a terrible boat disaster on the river a short distance above Pekin. An excursion boat loaded with people from Pekin and towns below had been to an Amusement Park above Peoria. On the way home the boat had struck a snag which tore a hole in it and it was sinking. As soon as word could reach Pekin aid was rushed to them. Many were on the lower deck dancing; these were in the greatest danger and many drowned. As bodies were recovered they were brought to a temporary morgue. The Home Guards and others spent the night rescueing [sic] all those who survived. The Guard remained on duty as long as needed for protection and to keep order. It was a terrible shock to the community and there were no more excursions on the river that season. Following this, during the fall and winter, there was an eperdemic [sic] of "flu" and many cases were fatal. Many new

graves were added to the cemetery. When we bought a lot at the death of Leland there were many vacant lots around the one we bought; after these two disasters there was not one left. This showed what a great loss of life there was in the months between the summer of 1917 and 1918.

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Within the next few years Bess and Walter took a trip to Macinac [sic] Island and one to Kansas City. In 1929 Bess had to go to a hospital for a serious operation. It was an anxious time for us until we knew the operation had been successful and she was out of danger. I wonder if one is just the same after an internal operation. Bess seemed to be, but in Feb., 1932, she was sick enough to go to bed with a feeling of lassitude and slight cold; she was never down stairs again, and on March 19, Walter, John and I were left desolate. How could we live without that dear one?

I had become more and more dependent on a cane as this arthritis I am afflicted with crept on me. I could no more walk far from the house and going up and down stairs was a slow tedious effort. We all realized that now I could not be able to keep house any more. Emma said I should come and make my home with her and here I am. I left the old home for this new one on the 1st day of May following the death of my dear Bess in March.

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When I came here to live I was able to be of some use. I took upon myself the job of all the darning and mending. Could do everything for myself and take care of my room, help sew for the children, Emma, and what clothes I needed; occasionally washed and wiped the dishes when the girls were in school and Emma washing. About the fourth year of my residence here I began to fail in my activities; this insideous [sic], creeping arthritis was getting more and more of a hold on me. I had to have help in dressing and undressing and had to have my cane handy all the time. Then that was not enough support and someone had to help me go from one room to another until I couldn't walk at all. Now I am perfectly helpless, spend my days and nights alternately in bed and chair. I have not had any clothes but a nightgown and bathrobe on for over a year; not even stockings as my feet are swollen [so] that they don't

look like human feet any more. I can't move myself in bed and as I can't lie on one side more than two hours or 2½ at a time I have to call for help, and I have to be lifted from bed to chair just like a baby. In addition to this affliction my hearing has completely gone from one ear and one has to be very close to my other and speak rather loud in order to make me understand what they say. I keep a scratch pad on the table with a pencil where one can carry on any long communication with me. Thank God I still have my eyesight so I can pass my weary hours with books. John got a rack to hold the book which I keep on the table in front of my chair. My hands are too crippled and tender to hold [a] book; holding the pen does not strain them. I have best of care and all is being done for me that can be. I don't suffer excruciating pain often but always have discomfort and my joints are so tender and sore that every move hurts. Emma is a wonderful nurse. It grieves me to have her so confined but she never lets me feel that I am a burden; but it does seem too bad now that her children are grown and she could have more freedom that I have to take so much of her time. I do not demand attention oftener than absolutely necessary. Whenever she does get a chance to go away from the house she sees that I am not left alone. Ann [my granddaughter] can attend to my wants almost as well as her mother; she has the strength, and knows how to use it, in lifting me. Patricia [her sister] has it as much as Ann and doesn't use what she has so well. I think that she is so afraid of hurting me that she is shy of using what she has. I have much to be thankful for so grit my teeth and try to bear my affliction with fortitude.

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This is all up-to-date of my family history. I am the last child of Charles Moody Morse.

CARL SANDBURG'S INFLUENCE ON MODERN POETRY

Richard H. Crowder

In 1914 critical readers (as well as uncritical) found in Sandburg some disturbing departures from the poems they were accustomed to enjoy. Stephen Crane, it is true, had experimented, but he was dead. That eternal sophomore, Richard Hovey, had written innocuously of wanderers, lovers, and comrades, but he too was dead. James Whitcomb Riley had long before run out of steam with a few stilted sonnets commemorating his departed friends, and he too would be dead in two years. Lizette Woodworth Reese, Louise Imogen Guiney, Edith Matilda Thomas, Anna Hempstead Branch, Josephine Preston Peabody—all these three-named ladies and more like them had been providing devourers of verse with their fare: moods of gentility, second-hand emotions, sterile and hackneyed line structure and stanzaic patterns. Like the snows of yesteryear, where are they now? An exception was E. A. Robinson, a stickler for classic rhyme, rhythm, and stanza. He was an original with several published volumes which nobody was reading much except Teddy Roosevelt, for, in spite of their conventional appearance, they were out of the accepted rut. Robert Frost had needed to go to England to find a publisher and was only now beginning to be mentioned in his home country, and possibly for the wrong reasons.

Small wonder that readers were shocked by the raucous "Chicago" and were puzzled by the typographical arrangements of "Lost" and "Jan Kubelik." These were in a cluster of poems in the opening pages of Harriet Monroe's POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE for March, 1914. Two years later they were in Sandburg's first book (not counting the earlier privately printed works). The contents of CHICAGO POEMS were distasteful, puzzling, invigorating—depending on what critic's comments one read. The reviewers were being called on to suspend reliance on the iambics

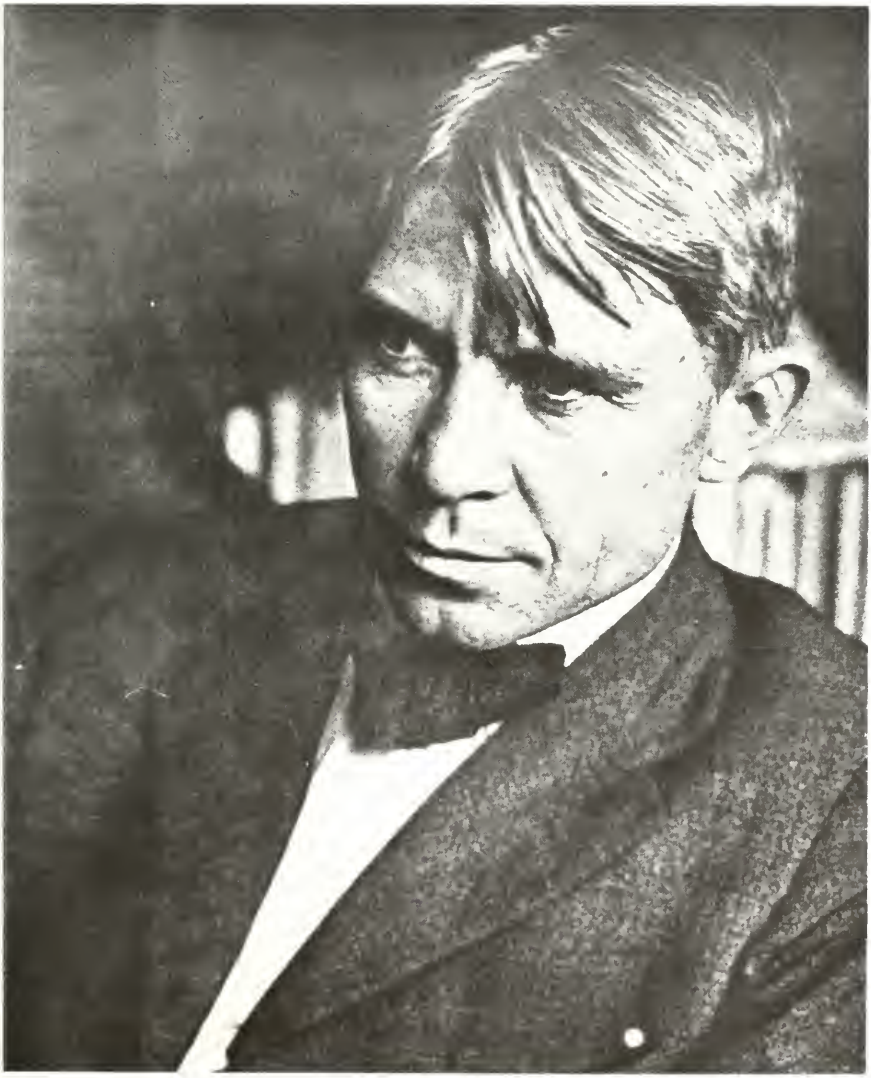
and trochees of Richard Watson Gilder, the expected enclosing rhymes of John Banister Tabb, the neat structures of Madison Cawein, the philosophic abstractions of George Santayana, the unsurprising subject matter of Robert Underwood Johnson.

When young poets started reading this new collection, what did they find? For one thing, there was a free verse modified from the poet's beloved Walt Whitman. More often than not, Sandburg's lines were shorter than his mentor's, and his unity was generally achieved not in the line itself (for he often divided clauses in the middle or even into thirds and fourths), but through frequent rhetorical repetitions—sometimes exact, sometimes with increments—and through modestly climactic conclusions. Younger readers also found in Sandburg's poetry the Populist point of view—the idea that the people are the central resource in the American experience. Other poets too found that this new man was free in his use of the idiom of the streets and factories—words and phrases uttered by what he called "the mob," in the purlieus of the city. They found unabashed expression of anger, of pride in strength, of tender compassion, but not the pointed ironies or the bookishness of William Vaughn Moody. Edgar Lee Masters and Vachel Lindsay may have been leading the way, but Sandburg was actually to take up the part of the American bard, to break completely away from the genteel tradition.

Meanwhile, ever since those first pieces in POETRY, Ezra Pound and Sandburg had been exchanging poems and compliments. Pound said he liked the way Sandburg had kept "down to brass tacks," though he missed the restraint that rhyme would have given the verses; he said, typically, that another urban poet was superior in this regard—the fifteenth-century French chronicler of the seamy side of Paris, Francois Villon. Pound also criticized the use of gutter language, which he said was often the easiest way out of a problem of communication and not always the best. In turn, Sandburg testified that Pound had "done most of living men to incite new impulses in poetry." Yet, when Pound tried to induce Sandburg to join the new movement of Imagism, Sandburg expressed preference for going his own unaligned way.

The next year following the publication of his book, it appeared certain that Wilson was not going to keep America out of war. In

order to demonstrate their basic loyalty to American ideology, Carl and his wife Paula left the Social-Democrat ranks in which they had served for years. To avoid any hint of association with the Bolshevik point of view, they declared themselves Independents, though their daughter Helga assures us they were in truth Democrats.[1] The change in part was parallel with the poet's gradual



Courtesy of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. from SANDBURG: PHOTOGRAPHERS VIEW CARL SANDBURG, copyright © 1966 by Edward Steichen.

Carl Sandburg, about age 35.

turning away from what Amy Lowell said had been too much propaganda in his writing. Always there would be traces of his Populist provenience. From this time on, however, beginning with CORNHUSKERS in 1918, there was a noticeable shift from efforts deliberately to change the face of the country. More and more, Sandburg was showing acceptance of what he found.

Was he a loner at the beginning of his career? He may have been an innovator in the matter of poetry, but think of Dreiser's Carrie Meeber, who, like some of Sandburg's young women, leaves the prairies for the city. Her portrait could be an extension of the poet's vignettes of the adventurous girl in "Red-Headed Restaurant Cashier," a restless Chick Lorimer in "Gone," a bored "Mamie" up from a dull Hoosier hamlet and finding no more in life in a Chicago bargain basement.[2] Think of Frank Norris's Sam Lewiston, who is ripped off by the wheeler-dealers of the grain market. How like a Sandburg character he is, but without hope. Sandburg in all fairness must be read in quantities if the reader is to see that he goes beyond Dreiser and Norris in ultimate trust even in the face of adversity. The point here is, however, that Sandburg was not alone in making the common people the center of his interest. It is another point that he showed them to be a complex of pride, bravery, stoicism, humor, hard work, and eternal expectation.

CHICAGO POEMS gained some converts. So did CORNHUSKERS, and two years after that so did SMOKE AND STEEL, which appeared in October, 1920. Earlier that year, in January, Sandburg had made a platform appearance at Cornell College, Iowa, the first of many, many college performances during the next forty years. His public readings, which conveyed his warm personal traits, helped a great deal to enhance his popularity and to sell his books, just as James Whitcomb Riley's road trips had done for him in the preceding generation. Again after another two-year interval, Sandburg published his fourth book of poems, SLABS OF THE SUNBURNT WEST. It was now 1922, a mountainous year in the history of American and British literature. Most important for my focus, it saw Eliot's THE WASTE LAND published in both England and the United States.

Here let me indulge in a quotation from something I wrote years ago: "Sandburg's techniques were the same as they had been

in 1914. He was no longer a revolutionist in prosody and language, for his revolt had now become habit and had lost its novelty. Sandburg had in his beginnings elbowed out John G. Neihardt, George Sterling, and Madison Cawein. Now he was giving way to a new generation; he belonged to the status quo and was himself an old boy. It is significant that Malcolm Cowley's review of SLABS OF THE SUNBURNT WEST appeared in the same issue of THE DIAL as the first momentous publication of THE WASTE LAND. The tide had turned."[3] I wrote that in the early 1960's; now in 1978 we can say that temporarily the tide had turned.

Sandburg had succeeded as no other poet had in the first quarter of this century in loosening the poem's structure, making it more flexible: in freeing the line endings of the restriction of rhyme, in broadening the scope of the language to include words and rhythms of the streets and factories, in speaking out as one of the people both from his own view and in the voices of others with whom he was sympathetic, in vivid description of urban detail as well as rural, of broad landscape as well as intimate garden. But we must admit that Sandburg's first burgeoning as poet was indeed over. His poetic influence would not be felt again for another twenty years or more.

Though the elitist DIAL had published the Eliot poem gladly and had admitted Cowley's comments on SLABS OF THE SUNBURNT WEST, it had with right good will in general given short shrift to the writings of Sandburg. Oddly, the work of the two poets had certain similarities, but critics did not acknowledge them. The first poem in Sandburg's book was "The Windy City," obviously using Chicago as its scene, just as THE WASTE LAND was also urban, centered in the exile's London. The poets had developed their themes in works of similar length: THE WASTE LAND is 434 lines long and "The Windy City" only 70 lines shorter. Line lengths are irregular in both poems, even though Eliot resorts to rhyme whereas Sandburg's verse is totally free. Both poems use a river bridge as an image central to the theme—an idea I will discuss shortly.

These may appear to be superficial likenesses. The differences between the two works are more profound. They reflect the attitudes of personalities poles apart. THE WASTE LAND is freighted with

irony. It pictures a fragmented world broken up by a sense of futility and an alienation of men from each other and from the power, beauty, and fulfillment of past civilizations. It reflects the fashionable attitudes among sophisticates toward contemporary social reality. Its thought is cosmopolitan, derived from the cultures of western Europe, from Homer to Baudelaire.

On the other hand, in "The Windy City" Sandburg's tone is inclined toward the matter of fact, toward acceptance. His world is built on the solidarity of the laboring classes. Most of his people, while independent, have a sense of belonging together. Whereas Eliot's view envelops a pointlessness, a lost spiritual community, Sandburg's attitude leans toward hope. His thought comes chiefly from his long-time Social-Democratic connection, from the publications of the Populists, from the folk wisdom of his subjects, and from his reading of Whitman and Emily Dickinson (with a nod to Stephen Crane). He does not condescend to the "people": he accepts them and enters into their life as participant-observer.

Eliot's technique, then, is formed out of reference to his favorite authors of the past, near and far. He echoes and quotes them in passages placed next to slang, scraps of words from popular music, parody, and scenes from London life, both working-class and aristocratic. His is a complex of culture and style, but always a blend of theme and meaning in delivering fundamental, profound commentary on the state of today's world as it appears to him.

Sandburg's technique, also juxtaposing contrasting manners of speech, draws on the common man's vocabulary with more sympathy, more daily familiarity than does Eliot. A good exercise here would be to contrast the monologue in the pub about Lou and Albert in part II of THE WASTE LAND with the breezy dialogue overheard in part 3 of "The Windy City." One sees, here, how Sandburg's lines are shaped by the common man's aphorism as well as his humor and pathos, born of experience which Sandburg had shared from childhood. If he is not so consciously literary in his imagery and suggestion, he nevertheless makes his earthy commentaries neighbor to the gossamer and somewhat mystical fabric of moonlight and leafy trees, a practice he claimed again and again was central to all poetry. In the opening pages of GOOD

MORNING, AMERICA (1929) his thirty-sixth definition of poetry calls it "the achievement of the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits." Likewise, in 1963 he published a last book of poems before his death, which he called HONEY AND SALT. His lyrics (hyacinths, honey) are as important to us as his realistic pictures (biscuits, salt).

To underscore further the differences in attitude between Eliot and Sandburg in 1922, let us examine specific passages. About half way through part III of THE WASTE LAND, "The Fire Sermon," is tucked a brief section describing the camaraderie of some Thames workmen:

> O City city, I can sometimes hear
> Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
> The Pleasant whining of a mandoline
> And a clatter and a chatter from within
> Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
> Of Magnus Martyr hold
> Inexplicable splendor of Ionian white and gold.[4]

In Eliot's view the nearness of the hustle and bustle of a midday rendezvous for laborers and the gorgeous glories of a Christopher Wren church only emphasize the marvels of civilizations past and the vulgarity of life present. For Eliot the fellowship of these men only draws attention to the alienation from society of a man of cultivated tastes.

It is just such a situation that Sandburg would reverse. For him, he says in more than one place, "The past is a bucket of ashes." His interest is in the vitality, the common purpose, the optimism of the fishmen. The man in his poem "Fish Crier" (p. 9) "dangles herring before prospective customers evincing a joy identical with that of Pavlowa dancing." For Sandburg there is no separation from life; there is only the likeness of emotions of fish dealer and prima ballerina assoluta. Instead of hearing in passing the jollities of a pub at noontime, Sandburg joins his own kind, "the little Family of Man hugging the little ball of Earth" (p. 471). In the poem "Neighbors" (p. 169) Sandburg hears not just a general "clatter and a chatter" from the ""Greek coffee house" he observes. Instead,

> . . . men at tables
> Spill Peloponnesian syllables
> And speak of shovels for street work
> And the new embankments of the Erie Railroad
> At Painted Post, Horse's Head, Salamanca.

He hears not just a noise but the actual words they are saying, the sense they are making about their daily living, what Wallace Stevens frequently called the"quotidian." Sandburg is not an outsider: he hears and appreciates the intimate details of the workmen's conversation; it is not just raucous racket for him, but the communication of his neighbors, the very stuff of life, of survival, of fruitfulness. In contrast, if Eliot had "neighbors," they were historical literary figures like Juliana of Norwich, George Herbert, Lancelot Andrewes, and John Donne.

To return to the differences between THE WASTE LAND and "The Windy City," let us examine bridge and water in each poem as setting and as metaphor. In the Eliot work, London Bridge is overflowing with citizens and world-wanderers, mostly spiritually dead and unconcerned with the life around them. ("London Bridge is falling down," the poet reminds us.) In "The Windy City" the Michigan Avenue Bridge, too, accommodates great crowds of people, but they are communicating with each other, if not through ideas born of theoretical and philosophical meditation, yet through folk wisdom and street slang. They are interested in each other on a familiar, daily basis. Whereas the Londoners only look down at their feet, the Chicagoans look at each other. If Eliot's bridge is falling down, Sandburg's bridge, with the alertness of a jackknife, opens to let the boats of thriving commerce through and then closes to allow the crowds to flow again, alive, aware.

Near London Bridge is King William Street, where the clock of the church of St. Mary Woolnoth announces the time, but is most binding for the listener when it is mysteriously silent on the stroke of nine. This is one of Eliot's gnomic references: it suggests complexly the hour of Christ's death and, in converse, the ninth month of the fertility process. At the north end of the Chicago bridge is the clock in the tower of the Wrigley Building, a structure openly related to business and a vigorous, on-going life, in contrast with St. Mary Woolnoth, a church structure which attracts very few worshippers, because faith and morality are falling apart. Once in a while, on the other hand, a passing Chicagoan admits that the imagination, planning, and execution that went into the building of the Wrigley skyscraper is at least worth remarking. In Eliot's London scene, night is just that—despair, separation, despair. At night in Chicago, however, the "lights" and "dots" of the

bridges make a "gray and yellow" show—an entertainment, a diversion, a lively performance for a lively crowd of onlookers. Sandburg is accepting what he has found.

Because of the literary modes and the philosophic moods of the 1920's, then, the Eliot poem became the prototype. Its tone was despair, its subject was loss of impulse toward the refinement of life, its method was highly referential, placing classical and Elizabethan poetry next to contemporary street argot and jazz rhythms in, I must say, a condescending way. The mood of the poets, the writers of fiction, and the critics in general was toward the esoteric, the tragic view, and, in a plain word, the "difficult." Sandburg, of course, had his readers and his audiences, but, with few exceptions, in the main these were the people of his audiences, members of what he called the "Family of Man," "the Mob," Whitman's "en masse." They did not read Hart Crane, Archibald MacLeish, Marianne Moore, or Wallace Stevens as did the younger practicing poets.

After World War I the writers and the academics of Sandburg's poetic prime were inclined to be of closed minds about Sandburg's achievement. Some of them had left America for the cultural thicknesses of Europe, as Eliot and Pound had done earlier, though possibly not enough emphasis has been placed on the fact that, except for occasional visits, the poets in the main did not follow Pound and Eliot. Frost stayed in New England; William Carlos Williams was in Rutherford; Wallace Stevens was in Hartford; Marianne Moore was in Brooklyn; Robinson Jeffers was in Carmel; and so on. Sandburg had gone abroad on a newspaper assignment, but he stayed firmly rooted in the States, studying and writing on American subjects, developing themes based soundly on the American dream. The 1920's and even the '30's of F.D.R., however, seemed to be no time for Sandburg's poetry among critics and fellow writers. They apparently wanted to luxuriate in self-pity and despair and thought they needed their version of the tragic outlook.

Sandburg's people, let it be said, can suffer, but the suffering is not an Eliotic "ai, ai!" It is experience in a life cycle, to be borne and transcended, to be used as a stepping stone, an upward-bound ladder rung. Let us hear Sandburg himself in THE PEOPLE, YES in 1936:

The learning and blundering people will live on.
They will be tricked and sold and again sold
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,
You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.

. . . . . .

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for
keeps, the people march:
"Where to? What next?" (pp. 615-17)

This is the conclusion of the poem. It is that "shovel of stars" in the sky that keeps them going. Contrast the people on London Bridge in THE WASTE LAND, where "each man fixed his eyes before his feet"—"each man," alienated, mind you, not "the people"; "his eyes before his feet," not lifted up to "a shovel of stars for keeps."

Like the poets, not all novelists followed Hemingway and Fitzgerald to the despair of post-war Europe. James T. Farrell, John Steinbeck, William Saroyan, for example, were attached to their native soil. Farrell's Chicago is Sandburg's Chicago in many ways; Steinbeck's pilgrims and California little people are the poet's "common man"; Saroyan's ethnics are his ethnics, though more gushing. Like the French Impressionist painters at the turn of the century (recall Renoir), these writers preferred the material of everyday life, the non-epic, the unimportant. Theirs were the scenes and voices of Sandburg's poems too. Nearly always, when he wrote of headline makers, of "big shots," he wrote as a debunker or as a satirist. He was related in this attitude to such muckrakers as Lincoln Steffens and Ida M. Tarbell, who in the first decade of the century had pictured Philadelphia and the Standard Oil Company no better than they deserved. Sandburg's explosion in the face of Billy Sunday was in the same vein. His straight-faced comment in "Limited" actually was satirizing the middle-class smoking-car traveler whose only goal was Omaha.

In the other arts American subjects and motifs also interested the craftsmen of the period. Many composers worked with American ideas that were reflected in their rhythms, melodies, and moods, though, like Sandburg, they were often of a new kind in exploring and expressing their own harmonies. A list of Charles Ives's orchestral works in the decade of the Steffens and Tarbell

exposés reads like a chauvinist's catalogue (ANTI-ABOLITIONIST RIOTS, SOME SOUTHPAW PITCHING). George Gershwin remained exuberantly American to the end. Aaron Copland invented the music for the ballets BILLY THE KID and RODEO. In 1944, the year Sandburg began work on his novel, REMEMBRANCE ROCK, Copland produced the lovely APPALACHIAN SPRING and a composition Sandburg surely would have applauded—FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN. The poet, then, was not left standing alone by the composers of the music as he explored American themes, scenes, and people in his own pioneering idiom.

Likewise, painters and graphic artists were absorbed by the same Americana that fascinated Sandburg and gave him inspiration, theme, and subject matter. Thomas Eakins drew from two sides of his personality to paint the athletic JOHN BIGLEN IN A SINGLE SHELL (Yale) and the aesthetic THE CELLO PLAYER (Pennsylvania Academy). We are here reminded of, on the one hand, Sandburg's muscular poems "A Tall Man" (pp. 42-43) and "Plowboy" (p. 68) and, on the other, of the fine long lines of "Kreisler" (p. 125) and "Jan Kubelik" (p. 33): "Your bow swept over a string, and a long low note quivered to the air." George Luks's THE SPIELERS (Phillips Andover) is a joyous picture of two little girls dancing, daughters of laborers. They could just have stepped off Sandburg's "Picnic Boat" (p. 10) still responding to the Polish brasses sounding out "a folk-song for the home-comers." The row of houses in winter snow in Charles Burchfield's SIX O'CLOCK (Syracuse) parallels the "six hundred porches" the milkman visits in Sandburg's "Psalm of Those Who Go Forth before Daylight" (p. 116). Reginald Marsh's WHY NOT USE THE L? (Whitney, New York) could be the scene of Sandburg's "Poems Done on a Late Night Car" (pp. 61-62). George Bellows' DEMPSEY AND FIRPO (Whitney) has all the strength and motion of Sandburg's "The Shovel Man" (p. 9). There are more, but these show that, in spite of Eliot's ascendancy, Sandburg was not a loner in his American creativity.

Parenthetically, in 1976 I published an article on "Sandburg's Chromatic Vision in HONEY AND SALT," which might have been subtitled "The Poet's Painterly Eye," for I focussed attention on the vivid colors in the 1963 volume.[5] My conclusion was that because of his unrestrictive use of tints and shades and primary colors he

had, unlike most of his contemporaries in their old age, retained a youthful verve and awareness not only in his view of the externals of nature but in his observance of life as a whole. Whereas poets like Stevens, Frost, and Eliot had turned to blacks and grays or to actual colorlessness in many instances, Sandburg had still pictured his world in reds, blues, pinks, yellows, as well as steels, bronzes, and grays—a riotously kaleidoscopic experience. The result was not altogether unlike a pointilliste painting. All the separate spots of color had to be absorbed by the reader to understand ultimately the unities of the poet's world. In technique, then, as well as in theme and subject matter he was neighbor to the artist.

Sandburg has been accused of lacking depth, of giving us nothing but noncontinuous, immediate images with no past or future. ("The past is a bucket of ashes" needs to be examined in the context of the complete poems.) His unity, however, is of a remarkable sort, born of his unchanging emotional center. If one must read many poems to conceive the whole range of color, so he must read many poems to recognize the single-mindedness running throughout. If the later poems are less pounding in propaganda, there is no slack in underlying anger at injustice and hypocrisy, in compassion for the ordinary person and the underprivileged, and in loving acceptance of natural and man-made objects. He maintains his controlled ecstasy rising from his absorption in the colors and moods of nature, and he shows constantly his love for family, friends, and humanity—especially the American masses, who had almost totally engaged his concentration during the early years of this century. We say it again: the cataloguing of details does, after all, add up to a total and steadily glowing image, the expression of the sturdy emotional experience of a very sane man, gifted with resourceful insight.

There are critics who say that no one has yet stepped into the role that Whitman outlined for the future poet of his America. It seems to me, however, that, the more I read Sandburg, the more he appears to have come close to filling the bill as Whitman's truly American poet whose country has absorbed "him as affectionately as he has absorbed it." There have been other roads to follow than the one Sandburg chose, but he has succeeded in giving shape on the page and permanence through his books to the words, the

rhythmic phrases, and the received symbols of everyday American life. Often with notable subtlety he has given memorable expression to the ideals of the American masses, his beloved "mob." As Frost has encouraged us to achieve moral insight and maturity through a Republican individualism in appreciating nature ourselves with sharpened sensitivity, so through Sandburg's eyes we see the Democratic point of view, our moral responsibility for society—both individuals nearby and crowds afar—enriched by a cherishing of the shapes, sounds, and colors in the natural world in which that society pursues its upward march. Sandburg's poems embrace all of life in a way Frost's do not attempt, through street slang, bluster, populist support, love poems, nature lyrics, city descriptions, and outbursts against hypocrisy. The scenes of America remain throughout all the books—city, the farm, the lakes and rivers, the mountains, the sea—and the people remain, the common people, the family, the friends, both modest and distinguished. And always the themes are there: love of humanity and of nature, the need for sympathetic understanding, the indignation at evil and deceit.

Almost alone of the well-known scholars who wrote reviews twenty-seven years ago of the first edition of COMPLETE POEMS, Louis Rubin was thorough and sympathetic, bringing balance and justice to earlier reviewers' opinionated myths.[6] Recently, in commenting on BREATHING TOKENS, the 1978 book of Sandburg poems edited by the poet's daughter Margaret, Rubin says that Sandburg will be remembered for his first book, CHICAGO POEMS, and for several dozen additional lyrics.[7] He sees Sandburg's reputation as high for his poetry up to 1926, making a strong contribution to the break-up of the legacy of the mauve decade. Then public attention was turned to his Lincoln biography and his skill as platform performer. In fact, his next major book of poetry, THE PEOPLE, YES (1936), did not come out for ten years, by which time it was obvious that he had taken a different road from the Imagists, whom Pound had futilely urged him to join in 1914. He had written over the years many small impressionist poems, but his techniques and subject matters had ranged far beyond the limitations imposed by the little band of poets first under the guidance of Pound and then of Amy Lowell. Rubin calls attention to the attitudes expressed in current college anthologies, that Sandburg's poems

may be unpolished and lacking in intensity, but they make vigorous and immediate response, especially to the experience of the city. Rubin says that there is more to Sandburg's poems and that the truth will come out eventually, because not only did Sandburg use our vernacular with skill and sophistication, but his poems are indeed unique and sometimes spectacularly beautiful.

Eliot, Pound, and the New Critics were powerful influences to the end of World War II. It was modish to be difficult and existential and especially aware of subtleties of meter and rhyme, to be corralled in the kennel of European culture. Then the war was over and a new breed appeared. True, fine poets like Richard Wilbur continued to be loyal to their heritage; Robert Lowell and Theodore Roethke emerged. But others found nourishment in another direction. Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were among the foremost spokesmen for a new freedom, back to Emerson—at least to his dictum if not to his praxis—with Emerson, Whitman, and then Sandburg as its pioneers. Even when not acknowledging Sandburg, poets began to feel that Sandburg-like liberation was perhaps closer to the American temperament of the time than Eliot and Pound, than Brooks and Warren would ever be. Ginsberg was shocking with his four-letter words and his explicit evocations, but he was in the long run honest and forthright. He was a founder of that seemingly footloose movement, the Beat Generation, marked by a freedom and mobility that Sandburg might have identified with. Listen to the first two lines of Ginsberg's "Howl":

> I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed
> by madness, starving hysterical naked,
> dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn
> looking for an angry fix. . . .[8]

The lines are generally longer than Sandburg's, more like Whitman's in their self-containment. But the Sandburg release has returned: freedom of diction, of subject matter, from linear restriction. Karl Shapiro in a recent review finds little distance between Sandburg and Ginsberg: says he, "both are political dreamers, idealists, impractical, joyous and outraged by turns, full of high seriousness and just plain bull."[9]

A different quotation from Ginsberg will show another side. "In Back of the Real" is an effort on the poet's part to see through ordinary ugliness to spiritual loveliness. These are the closing lines:

Yellow, yellow flower, and
flower of industry,
tough spikey ugly flower,
flower nonetheless,
with the form of the great yellow
Rose in your brain!
This is the flower of the World.[10]

Does this not recall the Sandburg of "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard," "Moonlight and Maggots," and "Lumber Yard Pools at Sunset"?

Without specific data it is difficult to assess the influence of an older poet on a new generation. I am going to quote from an early Sandburg poem and from a late one, and then follow that with excerpts from other poets born after the publication of THE WASTE LAND to show they are not far from the Sandburg vein in many ways. The first lines are from the close of "Old Woman" (p. 69), Chicago realism in the customary unrhymed verses of irregular length, the last line a climactic single word of two syllables. The observer is on the last streetcar of the night schedule.

The headlight finds the way
And life is gone from the wet and the welter—
Only an old woman, bloated, disheveled and bleared
Far-wandered waif of other days,
Huddles for sleep in a doorway,
Homeless.

The second example is the first section of "Contemplation Basket" from the latest volume, BREATHING TOKENS. Note how colors are still in this poem of an older writer.

The flamewash swim of five scarlet fish
gives eyes a deed of motion and light.
One fast line of a redbird flight
can hold the heart of a sunrise cry.

A basket of yellow corn,
a bowl of black-and-gold pansies,
may feed hungering blood and thirsting eyes.

The slide of a spotted snake to a slant of sun
or the flagrance of the June bloom of peonies
or the laughter of a bushel of new potatoes—
they may speak to the eyes and the blood.

The hushed rituals of gold and shadow
move over summer oats, over harvest corn. . . .[11]

The first of the parallel poems appeared in THE NEW YORKER for January 23 of this year, and is by Louise Glück, a thirty-five-year-old New York poet much in vogue. The poem is her reaction to a painting in a museum. The lines are short, irregular, unrhymed.

The language is uncomplicated, apparently naive, for there are many monosyllabic words. Comparison with Sandburg can be made in line structure, diction, mood, theme. Called "The Sick Child (Study in Oils)," it reads, in part:

A small child
is ill, has wakened.
. . . . . .
And the child
relaxes in her mother's arms.
The mother does not sleep;
she stares
fixedly into the bright museum.
By spring the child will die.
Then it is wrong, wrong
to hold her—
let her be alone,
without memory. . . .[12]

And now, excerpts from several poets born in the mid-1920's. First, three men, friends at Harvard, leaders in the group in the fifties called the "New York Poets." Their urbanism links them to Sandburg as does their imagery, drawn from the little acts of daily life that add up to significance for the unpretentious and unprestigious man. Here is the first stanza of "A Step Away from Them," by Frank O'Hara:

It's my lunch hour, so I go
for a walk among the mum-colored
cabs. First, down the sidewalk
where laborers feed their dirty
glistening torsos sandwiches
and Coca-Cola, with yellow helmets
on. They protect them from falling
bricks, I guess. Then onto the
avenue where skirts are flipping
above heels and blow up over
grates. The sun is hot, but the
cabs stir up the air. I look
at bargains in wristwatches. There
are cats playing in sawdust.[13]

Could not Sandburg have collected these details, adding up to a summer noon in the city?

The second in this group, by John Ashbery, is the sestet of the first of "Two Sonnets," in which you will seek in vain the rhyme scheme set down by Petrarch or Shakespeare. Intimacy, color, and popular culture crowd into these six lines:

The iodine bottle sat in the hall
And out over the park where crawled roadsters
The apricot and purple clouds were
And our blood flowed down the grating
Of the cream-colored embassy.
Inside it they had a record of "The St. Louis Blues."[14]

In Kenneth Koch's poem called "Thanksgiving," the first two stanzas are marked by Sandburgian colors and fantasies:

> What's sweeter than at the end of a summer's day
> To suddenly drift away
> From the green match-wrappers in an open pocket-book
> And be part of the boards of a tavern?
>
> A tavern made of new wood.
> There's an orange-red sun in the sky
> And a redskin is hunting for you underneath ladders of timber.
> I will buy this tavern. Will you buy this tavern? I do.[15]

Now we move to the countryside. David Wagoner is, like Sandburg, of Midwest origin. Like Sandburg he has a keen eye for the phenomena of nature. Moreover, his lines are unrhymed, his diction plain. Like Sandburg he can make nature strange, a cause for wonder. Here is part of a poem Wagoner has called "The Poets Agree to Be Quiet by the Swamp":

> Strokes of light like heron's legs in the cattails,
> Mud underneath, frogs lying even deeper.
> Therefore the poets may keep quiet.
> But the corners of their mouths grin past their hands.
> They stick their elbows out into the evening,
> Stoop, and begin the ancient croaking.[16]

The next poet is Galway Kinnell. He here addresses a chief American poet to champion the challenges of rhyme and of high discipline in the classic sense. The colloquial style would be close to Sandburg's heart. This is the first of five sections:

> Why do you talk so much
> Robert Frost? One day
> I drove up to Ripton to ask.
>
> I stayed the whole day
> And never got the chance
> To put the question.
> I drove off at dusk
>
> Worn out and aching
> In both ears. Robert Frost,
>
> Were you shy as a boy?
> Do you go on making up
> For some long stint of solitude?
>
> Is it simply that talk
> Doesn't have to be metered and rhymed?
> Or is gab distracting from something worse?[17]

The last excerpt is again from THE NEW YORKER, January 30, this year. The poet, much older than the others I have been quoting, was seventy-three on April 24. A leading proponent of the New Criticism, he is editor of a new and monumental anthology of American literature. Robert Penn Warren has been inclined to

patronize Sandburg, yet he can sound like this (the last eight lines of "Heart of a Backlog"):

> Has the thought ever struck you to rise and go forth—yes, lost
> In the whiteness—to never look upward, or back, only on,
> And no sound but the snow-crunch, and breath
> Gone crisp like the tearing of paper? Listen!
>
> No, no—just a tree, far off, when ice inward bites.
> No, no, don't look back—oh, I beg you!
> I beg you not to look back, in God's name.[18]

Possibly someone is warning Lot's wife here, but don't I catch the echo of a familiar voice: "The past is a bucket of ashes"?

I am firmly convinced that these seven poets I have quoted would not sound as they do if Sandburg, beginning in 1914, had not made those initial explorations.

Now let me quote, finally, from a poem in BREATHING TOKENS. It is called "Poplars" and will remind us once more of how our poet sounds. Note, in the three-line song of the trees at the end, the beautiful word "loaf" that Whitman loved so much.

> A few poplars standing to the west
> And one star and two stars and three,
> And a sky changing every so little
> . . . . . .
> And to this a few poplars singing, strumming
> Steady to the wind their music:
> This fills an evening hour.
> Here we loaf an hour, half a night.
> Here we find who keeps our memory.[19]

If this new volume neither adds to nor subtracts from Sandburg's status as a poet, it nevertheless does give us a further opportunity to feel his emotions, envision his scenes, flavor his diction, absorb his themes. Reading the reviews, one senses that the condescensions of the Eliotic era are fading before the important truth that Sandburg has been a vital element in the history of twentieth-century poetry. Karl Shapiro makes no bones about it. Himself a poet of no mean reputation, he sees Sandburg as being as strong an influence on American verse as Pound or William Carlos Williams. Today's poets have in him a model for their own free verse, language experiments, street argot. He could indeed be called "the first American Street Poet," such as one sees and hears nowadays in city taverns and campus hangouts. Sandburg would appreciate the current drive for equality. He would applaud the loud, corny sentimentality. If we can judge by his letters and by

anecdotes about him, he would be amused and diverted by the vulgar epithets and the obscenities that go beyond frankness. If Sandburg lacks the gifts of prophecy claimed for Whitman, the master craftsmanship ascribed to Frost, and the "subterranean spirit" associated with Poe, he at least has not been relegated to the arid theories of the academics who are tearing Pound and Eliot apart.

V. S. Pritchett said recently, "To end not with a bang but a whimper may have suited the twenties, but it is useless now."[20] We might add that it was always useless to Sandburg. The poets of the present generation (beginning with the tiny tyros of the public elementary schools on through college to Warren himself) are nearer to him at this moment than they may realize or are willing to admit. He continues to loom large and serene as a major poet in our time.

NOTES

(This essay was adapted from an address delivered at The Sandburg Symposium, Cornell College, April 13, 1978.)

[1]See Helga Sandburg, A GREAT AND GLORIOUS ROMANCE (New York: Harcourt, 1978).

[2]THE COMPLETE POEMS OF CARL SANDBURG, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1976), pp. 166, 64, 17. All quotations from Sandburg's poems are from this edition, and hereafter page numbers will be given in parentheses.

[3]Richard Crowder, CARL SANDBURG (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 87.

[4]T. S. Eliot, THE WASTE LAND, in THE COMPLETE POEMS AND PLAYS (New York: Harcourt, 1952), p. 45.

[5]Richard Crowder, "Sandburg's Chromatic Vision in HONEY AND SALT," in THE VISION OF THIS LAND, ed. John E. Hallwas and Dennis J. Reader (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1976), pp. 92-104.

[6]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Chicago Revisited," HOPKINS REVIEW, 4 (Winter 1951), pp. 63-69.

[7]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Review of BREATHING TOKENS, THE NEW REPUBLIC, 28 Jan. 1978, pp. 35-36.

[8]Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," in AMERICAN POETRY AND PROSE, 5th ed., ed. Norman Foerster, et al. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 1471.

[9]Karl Shapiro, Review of BREATHING TOKENS, Chicago TRIBUNE, 1 Jan. 1978, sec. 7, p. 1.

[10]Ginsberg, "In Back of the Real," in AMERICAN POETRY AND PROSE, p. 1479.

[11]Carl Sandburg, "Contemplation Basket," in BREATHING TOKENS, ed. Margaret Sandburg (New York: Harcourt, 1978), p. 170. Copyright 1978 by Maurice C. Greenbaum and Frank M. Parker, Trustees of the Sandburg Family Trust, copyright 1978 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

[12]Louise Glück, "The Sick Child (Study in Oils)," THE NEW YORKER, 23 Jan. 1978, p. 46.

[13]Frank O'Hara, "A Step Away from Them," in THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, ed. Hayden Carruth (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 586.

[14]John Ashbery, "Two Sonnets," in THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, p. 593.

[15]Kenneth Koch, "Thanksgiving," in THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, p. 545.

[16]David Wagoner, "The Poets Agree to Be Quiet by the Swamp," in THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, p. 589.

[17]Galway Kinnell, "For Robert Frost," in THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, p. 600.

[18]Robert Penn Warren, "Heart of a Backlog," THE NEW YORKER, 30 Jan. 1978, p. 34.

[19]Carl Sandburg, "Poplars," in BREATHING TOKENS, p. 73.

[20]V. S. Pritchett, "An Exile's Luggage," THE NEW YORKER, 20 March 1978, p. 146.

THE REGIONAL ESSAYS OF JERRY KLEIN

John E. Hallwas

In 1918 Carl Sandburg said in "Prairie"—his most extensive poetic interpretation of the Midwest—"The land and the people hold memories. . . ."[1] By this, he meant that a slowly changing landscape and people who are reluctant to let go of the past make remembrance an important aspect of midwestern life in the nonmetropolitan areas. A few years earlier Edgar Lee Masters had demonstrated as much with his SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY (1915), in which the dead residents of a western Illinois town (and its rural environs) recall their lives. But Sandburg's comment now also applies to another regional literary achievement: the essays of Jerry Klein. The latter is a Peoria newspaperman who has written a number of feature articles about the landscape and people of western Illinois during the past several years—articles in which the past is a deeply felt aspect of the present. Taken together, his essays represent the most thorough literary examination of regional life since SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY appeared. Moreover, Klein's prose has much in common with Masters' poetry, as it does with Sandburg's, and there are also some thematic resemblances to Vachel Lindsay's work as well. Hence, his achievement is regional by virtue of its literary associations as well as its subject matter.

A true native of the region, Klein was born in Peoria on December 19, 1926, and grew up in the East Bluff area of the city. He attended St. Bernard's parochial school and Spaulding Institute, graduating from the latter in 1945. However, he entered the Navy in December, 1944—before receiving his secondary school diploma—and served as a radioman in the South Pacific during World War II. In 1950 he received his Bachelor of Music degree from

Bradley University, which was followed by two years of graduate work in music at the University of Illinois.

He liked his home town well enough to want to stay in the area, but Peoria held few opportunities for a young concert pianist. After a one-year stint as a "rod man" and surveyor for the state highway department, he responded to a Peoria JOURNAL STAR ad for an editorial writer. That was in September, 1953.

Fortunately, the managing editor, Gomer Bath, did not insist on much by way of experience—for Klein had none. Instead, he offered the tall young man a chance to prove he could fill the position. "Bring me in three editorials tomorrow," Bath said.[2] Klein went home, looked at some editorials, wrote three of his own, and brought them in the next day. He got the job.

On June 4, 1955, he married Mary E. Dudas, who had also been raised in Peoria, and in the years that followed the Kleins had seven children.[3] They now live in Lourdes, about nine miles east of Peoria.

Klein's writing for the JOURNAL STAR during his twenty-five-year career falls roughly into three categories. Criticism of the performing arts in Peoria has been his main assignment. Also, for a few years he wrote a humorous column called "Once Over Lightly," which appeared in the newspaper's WEEKENDER supplement. However, his literary achievement resides in the occasional feature articles that he has written during the past several years, virtually all of which deal with Peoria and its hinterland in west-central Illinois.

Regional essays became a prime concern for Klein early in 1973 when he got the idea of reviewing the area's communities "like you do a concert." That is, he decided to "just walk in and be totally impressionistic about a town," to try to simply "get the flavor of it and write about it." He soon expanded his focus to include Peoria itself and the rural landscape of the region. For most of these essays he worked with photographer Jack Bradley, who recently left the JOURNAL STAR.

Of course, their success in responding to a community in this way depended, in part, on what happened when they got there. In one place, as Klein put it, "it seemed like the whole town was standing there waiting for us," and "the sense of time and place and

character was so interwoven that it was kind of amazing"—but in a couple of other locations "the stories never turned out."

In those essays that did turn out, Klein brought to the task a regional native's sensitivity to the people and places he wrote about, an often poetic style of writing that is almost unique in the world of journalistic prose, and a conviction that "there is something of infinite value" in the life of the region. The best of his articles powerfully communicate that view.

During the past several years Klein has also had articles and stories published in REDBOOK, READER'S DIGEST, and FORD TIMES. The last of these magazines carried a regional piece called "Steamboat A-comin'," the story of the JULIA BELLE SWAIN, in 1977. He has also written several articles that have been carried in the New York TIMES.

That Klein has been influenced by Edgar Lee Masters there is no question. In a 1968 article called "Along the Spoon"—which preceded by a few years his more systematic attempt to survey the region—he quotes several lines from "The Hill," the opening lyric in SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY, and all of "Hare Drummer," the most nostalgic epitaph in the volume. The essay, in which Klein records his impressions along the newly opened Spoon River Drive, is in perfect keeping with the spirit of the latter poem:

> It [the Spoon River] passes through sleepy valleys and under bridges where cars seldom cross any more. Trees in places bend almost to the water, the maples, elms and willows, and sometimes they meet across the middle. There are still clamshells buried in the soft mud along the banks, and the water occasionally splashes with the jumping of a fish. In the fields there is the ceaseless sound of the crickets, and the old cemeteries along the hillsides with their crooked tombstones are immensely peaceful in the chill wind of an October afternoon.[4]

Much more recently, in July of last year, Klein wrote about the upper Spoon River Valley in a beautiful piece of descriptive writing called "The Other End of the Spoon." Although he claims that the upper Spoon is quite different from the area "which Edgar Lee Masters made forever famous," he closes the essay by saying, "There are the weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozer, the fighter sleeping on their hills up here too."[5]

But undoubtedly the essay that reveals most about Masters' influence on Klein is "Lewistown," written in 1976. The author's

Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Spoon River Bridge south of Wyoming.

theme, announced in the opening sentence, is the elemental nature of small town life: "Life goes slowly here, geared almost to the great ebb and flow of the seasons and the even greater coming and going of life and death."[6] Moreover, the high point of the article is Klein's visit to Oak Hill Cemetery—"generally regarded as 'The Hill'" of the ANTHOLOGY—where he clearly relates his theme of continuity amid slow seasonal change to the work of Masters:

> The old graves here go back a hundred years and more and there is at this time of year [spring] a sense of deep peace. The wind in the newly leafed trees takes on a new sound. It is not the dry and scratchy rustle of winter, but a warmer, full-throated, urgent plea. And the ground is soft, springy. Bird songs and stirrings. Lichen on the headstones.
>
> Some of these more prominent graves are surrounded by wrought iron fencing, partly fallen now, the gates with rusted hinges. . . .
>
> But Masters' hill and Masters' people range all along the valley of the Spoon, the merchants, the bankers, the brawlers, in quiet little cemeteries where crickets sound on warm autumn afternoons and tall grass bends in the wind.

Of course, Lewistown is a thriving community, but Klein can not help but view the residents as slowly departing toward the hill with

their memories. Referring to the boom years during World War II, he says, "All that happened over thirty years ago. Third of a century. And the memories are partly gone, out on the hill now, beneath the soft spring turf of Oak Hill. Lots of people die in 30 years' time. Lots of people born, moving in." It is not surprising that the article closes with the author again at the cemetery, meditating on the people who lie there—"Each one a story that has been edited down so tightly that there are only names and dates left."

Clearly, the fact that "The land and the people hold memories" in the writing of Jerry Klein is partially the result of the influence of Masters' ANTHOLOGY. Indeed, several of his essays find him meditating on the gravestones in some western Illinois cemetery.

If the Spoon River poet captured the essential life of the western Illinois town of a century ago (Masters grew up in the 1870's and 1880's), Klein has managed to reflect the unique character of various towns in his recent essays. The best of his articles on regional communities view the present and past of the town through

Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Upper Spoon River.

a combination of Klein's own impressions and carefully selected comments by local residents. The effect is both penetrating and nostalgic.

"Beardstown" is a good example. The article opens with Klein's own view of the community:

> Mention Beardstown and the mind will sketch a series of quick and lasting impressions: a sleepy river town that still has the melodious notes of the packet boat whistles ringing in its ears; the river forever rolling past, bankfull and treacherous in the spring, more lazy come July; memories of stage coaches clattering off to the east, to Springfield, and a tall, circuit-riding lawyer, boots thick with prairie dust, riding into town to defend Duff Armstrong; a boy sitting along the levee watching the river and waiting for a catfish to strike the hook at the other end of his bamboo pole.[7]

It also contains one of his best regional characterizations, "Happy" Jamison, Jr., a 79-year-old resident who leads the author to his home, "opens a voluminous scrapbook, and begins talking about the old days on the river":

> One can almost hear the faint hiss of steampower as he goes on, feel the decks trembling, and see the long corrugated wake rolling out astern.
>
> . . . . . .

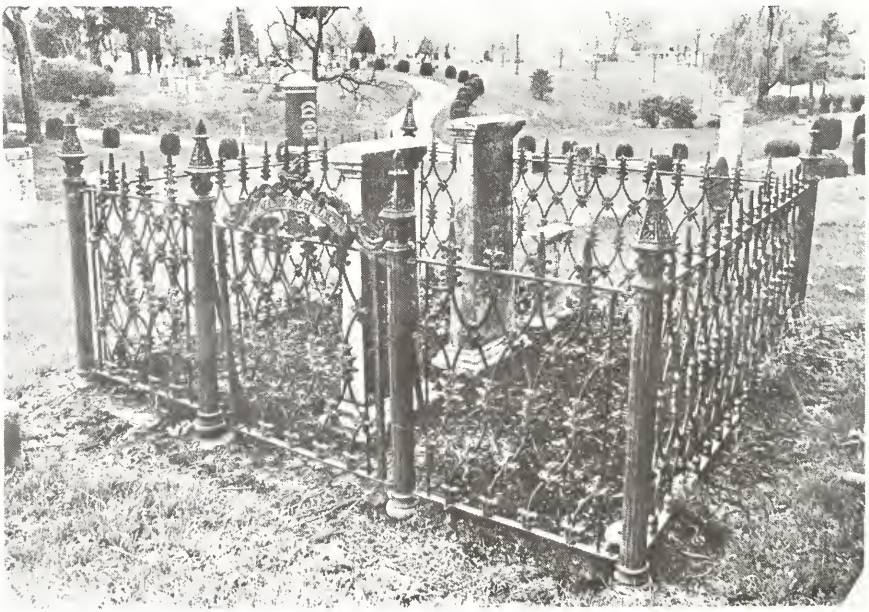


Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Lewistown cemetery.

> He talks about old boats and old days and the sharp memory keeps dredging up names and places—the barge PEARL, Treadway Lake, Mascoutin Bay, the Meredosia bridge, Little Beardstown, Throckmorton's Button Factory, the DAVID SWAIN, the Clendenin Slough, Little Field Spreads, and on and on.
>
> "Had lots of pecan trees along the river in the old days, before they cut that Chicago canal. Hundreds of 'em. Water killed all that stuff off. I've fished and hunted all my life. Had a hundred ducks lying on that kitchen floor one time. You get on that river and you just love it."

It would be hard to find a better literary illustration of Sandburg's comment, "The land and the people hold memories," than Klein's "Beardstown."

The same could be said for "Havana: The Memories Linger On. . . ." which appeared in April, 1974. Of course, the subject here too is an old Illinois River town. At the beginning of the essay Klein offers his own impressions: "The fishing is only an echo of the great days, the steamboat whistles and cries of the drovers have all died away, and the sounds of the slot machines—cherries clicking into windows and the silvery gush of coins—are only memories now, but Havana still has the flavor of a rugged town out of the Twenties, maybe earlier."[8] The first characterization he presents is probably the essential Havana resident, an old fisherman with memories of the "great days":

> They once took a carload of fish out of here every day for 30 days straight. That was back about 1915 or so, and there was 20 to 25,000 pounds in each car.
>
> We had Thompson Lake to fish in then. And Spring Lake. Now they're all levied into farms, and the fish have got no place but the river. The traffic takes care of them there.
>
> We used to see boats once in a while, the Bald Eagle, the Golden Eagle, the Commanche, and so on, but now we get up to 15 boats a day, and it tears hell out of the river."
>
> This is Bill Riley talking, 79 years old now, sitting in the back room of Foster's Fish Market, where a few pitiful buckets-ful of buffalo and catfish are gasping and twitching.
>
> "I helped make the last haul at Thompson Lake. The dredge boat was waiting for us to get out, and when I got out, he closed the levy. Took 40,000 pounds of fish. We worked two nights and three days to get 'em out of the seine."

The wonder and the tragedy of Bill Riley's life is summed up in this carefully constructed memory sequence—which resembles the epitaphs in Masters' ANTHOLOGY. But the Havana essay also has another fine characterization, through which Klein offers a very different view of the town's past. Bud Cullinane is a wealthy man who lives in a house "right out of the great days of Natchez, with an

interior like a Parisian salon and a garden from 'The Great Gatsby,'" and he is as obviously cosmopolitan as Riley is regional:

> Bud Cullinane, a local landholder, sits . . . near his grandfather's roll-top desk. Old Irish, from settlers who came over impoverished from the potato famine, found land, and ultimately wealth. On his desk is a copy of Strunk's "The Elements of Style" and Stephen Birmingham's "Real Lace."
>
> Cullinane lives in the house built by Maj. Fullerton of Natchez; Lincoln once stayed in it. And Cullinane has a hunting lodge in the country where pianist Arthur Rubenstein was once a guest and was served his favorite wine—Mouton-Rothschild.
>
> Cullinane is equally at home in Paris, which he loves, or in Havana, which he also loves. "An exceptional town," he says, and he waves at people as he passes. He has friends in high places and in low and talks with ease about Baccarat crystal or a sagging farm gate.

This remarkably detailed characterization conveys enormous information about Cullinane's outlook and style of life—much of it through implication. In short, the three carefully put together paragraphs—each beginning with the man's name and ending with a reference to some object of wealth—have poetic density.

If Havana reminds Klein of a town "out of the Twenties," Canton reminds him of the Thirties—and hence, of the days he remembers so vividly from his own childhood. "Canton—The 30's Stay" appeared in August, 1973, and it opens with one of the author's most nostalgic passages:

> Driving into Canton late on a summer evening brings the feel of going backwards in time into the 30's, when kids played kick the can on quiet streets or roller-skated in the lingering dusks, when the soft summer nights folded themselves around little towns, leaving long echoes of familiar sounds. Car tires whining on brick streets. Bugs swarming around street lights. Distant voices crying, "You're it" or "olly olly ox in free." Porch swings creaking. The slam of a car door. Mothers calling their children across darkened yards. Radios all tuned to Fibber McGee and Molly or the Joe Louis fight. The whirr of electric fans, the far-off wail of a train rushing through the night to some far-off place.[9]

While in town, Klein visits the establishments where memories are bound to linger—such as the Hotel Canton, where "long carpeted halls creak with the echoes of over 60 years of footsteps," and the turn-of-the-century drugstore of Edward Lewis, who "has the kind of memory that begs to be picked." He also stops at the oldest grocery store in town:

> Along the square there is one of the last of the old-time grocery stores. Tony's Fruit Store. It is run by 73-year-old

> Tony Pusatere. The store has been there since 1901 and he has run it since 1930. Inside is a dark and savory clutter, with high shelves stacked with a bewildering array of food. "There used to be forty, fifty stores like this in town," Pusatere says, "Now I'm the only one left. The rest is big markets. People will be sorry one day."

Before the author leaves the old store he sees a boy come in for candy, looking like a vision from his own childhood: "It seems strange that he is not wearing knickers." By the close of the article, he is caught between two realities—the Canton of the 30's and the present-day town:

> It is when night falls that the feeling of having retreated in time becomes strongest. Dusk lingers and then fades. There are crickets, then fireflies.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> From a television set comes an eerie glow and the sound of laughter. It is not Edgar Bergan and Charley McCarthy, or Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor, but something newer. Car tires whine across the brick and lights wash across curtained windows. A motorcycle tears into the night and then it is silent again. It is a deep and peaceful silence that has worn so well and lasted so long that it is hard to realize that it is 1973 and not 1937 all over again. But it is. It is.

Although "Canton—The 30's Stay" is well unified, Klein's most carefully structured article about a town is probably a 1975 work called "There's No Rush in Rushville. . . ." In this essay he deliberately avoids lengthy recollections in order to focus on a summer day in the life of the community. The opening very subtly introduces the article's main theme, the slow but relentless passage of time—which is the adversary of the old men who sit on the benches in the square:

> Mid-morning and already hot. The cornfields begin to melt into a watery haze far across the prairie, and the thermometer on the bank blinks into the 80's.
>
> It will reach 90 before this day is past, and the men sitting on the green slat benches in the square will slide backwards toward the shade as the sun burns its way across the sky above and the lawn at their feet.[10]

Throughout Klein's description of the summer day a circus is referred to as setting up in town, and for one of the old men—Donald Juett—it brings memories of the distant past and an accompanying sense of how old he's getting:

> Donald Juett, retired farmer and "retired just about everything," leans on a thick square yardstick that he uses as a cane and watches the proceedings. "Used to be some pretty decent circuses here in the old days," he says. "Barnum and Bailey were here, but never Ringling Brothers." He says that he goes around every day now and "stirs up the neighborhood." He says that he will be 77—if he makes it to fall.

Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Men on benches in Rushville's square.

After describing several aspects of the town, which convey a sense of "peace and stability" mingled with "vitality," the author returns, at the article's end, to his central theme. He indicates various ways in which the passage of time is measured in Rushville on this early summer day:

> The men in the square lament that Friday and Saturday nights are not what they used to be, when crowds of people surged along the streets and filled the grassy square, and when there was band music and a sense of the festive life. "Lot of that gone now" says one of the men. "Lot of those people gone too, planted out in the cemetery. Maybe some of us will be, too, next time you come by. Be a whole new bunch here."
>
> Maybe.
>
> The sun pushes on to the west, and the shade from the trees dapples the grass. The flag uncurls slowly in the hot breeze. Ninety degrees now. Two girls in short skirts climb into an Oldsmobile and drive away, noisily. The McShane Bell in the courthouse tower clangs again, once, twice.
>
> Almost time for the circus matinee. Barefoot boys with dollar bills crumpled in their jeans pockets begin to head toward the fairgrounds, down the wide street, past the houses with the deep lawns, on sidewalks set far back from curbs.
>
> Step right up. Time to start the music. Time to start the show. Time to start the summer that has, in Rushvile, the gentle and easy flow of cool water through a meadow creek, a cloud

> drifting across a hot sky, the talk of old men beneath the trees in the square, or that of the women on the benches along the sidewalk or in the cafe.
>
> Tomorrow the circus will be gone. For the young, summer will stretch away endlessly, like the great shimmering prairie. Fall, for the older ones, comes far too soon.

There is a subtle but effective contrast here between the youngsters—hurrying to the circus, living thoroughly within the present moment, starting a summer that "will stretch away endlessly"—and the old men on the square, who measure the day's activity in relationship to the past and who are concerned with making it to the fall.

Also written in 1975 is Klein's essay on Goofy Ridge, the most unusual community he visited in the region. As he says at the outset, "It is a chaotic collection of old and new trailers, pig houses, shacks, sheds, cabins, outhouses, permastone cottages, garages and old buses. . . . "[11] As this perhaps suggests, Goofy Ridge is really not a town at all, but "a non-town, listed on no highway maps and possessing no governmental entity," a place where the people "have achieved and stoutly defend an individualistic democracy of near Jeffersonian proportions." Located along Lake Chautauqua on the Illinois River, it developed as a unique sort of resort area: "Gabby Hartnett and other big people from Chicago used to come here for something different. Drink and fish with the local folks down along the Illinois. A midwestern Dogpatch."

Klein once commented that "the real soul of a town is in bars."[12] Of course, people in bars also usually have the time and inclination to talk to a visiting writer, but his remark certainly applies to Goofy Ridge, which has four taverns for only 400 people. Indeed, he comments at one point that the community's social life "centers largely around the taverns." In one of them Klein runs across someone who is as close to the soul of the community as any resident. Elizabeth Buchanan, who runs the Goofy Ridge Tavern, keeps "clippings from old newspapers in the drawer behind the bar" and tells "stories about the crowds that used to gather for Ditch Day, a political and social celebration held in honor of the dredging of the Goofy Ridge ditch."

As one might expect, Klein's description of the rustic community is appropriately serio-comic, right down to his closing meditation, which depicts outhouses in a late winter dusk:

> Quiet now. No one out in the yards yet. Dusk settles slowly through the woods. Lights come on in the old pre-war trailers. Stoves glow. The door bangs on an outhouse. One has polka dots on the outside and the sign, "Sapphire Beanery." Another appears to be made of brick. One has a screened-in porch. There are new moons carved into the doors.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ice breaking up along the river. Soon the long lines of geese going north again. Fishing. Warm days. And the easy, easy livin'.

But as this also indicates, even in Goofy Ridge life somehow has a quiet splendor, attuned as it is to the slow pace of seasonal change.

Klein has written so many articles on western Illinois towns—more than two dozen—that it would be impossible to deal with all of them in the present study, but the few which have been discussed should indicate that the best of them are very fine essays. Not since SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY has regional community life been so thoroughly examined or native characterizations so vividly presented.

It would perhaps be overstating the case to say that Klein's essays show the influence of Carl Sandburg, but there are some remarkable similarities between the former's prose and the latter's poetry. The resemblances are primarily thematic, but Klein's style in a few articles is also reminiscent of the poet's free verse.

"Galesburg" was published in April, 1973, the first of Klein's proposed series of feature articles on towns in the Peoria vicinity. It is not one of his finest literary achievements, but it does indicate that he has been exposed to Sandburg's continuing presence in the region. While in Galesburg he visited the poet's birthplace and spoke with Lauren Goff, who offered "endless stories about Sandburg and his family and how the house was saved and restored."[13] He also read some copies of Sandburg's poems that hang on the walls of the home, and he stopped in the back yard at Remembrance Rock: "Out in the back, flanked by evergreens that whisper softly in the spring wind, is the rock under which Sandburg's ashes lie. '. . . for it could be a place to come and remember.'"

The theme of remembrance is one great similarity between the achievements of the two authors. For example, in November,

1975, Klein wrote an article called "Armistice Day 1975," and although it does not deal with the region, it clearly displays his literary kinship with Sandburg. The latter often wrote about remembering the dead of American wars—in poems like "Shenandoah," "Grass," and "The Long Shadow of Lincoln: A Litany." "Grass," in particular, written during World War I, evokes the dead on the Western Front:

> . . . pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
> Shovel them under and let me work.
> Two years, ten years, and the passengers ask the conductor:
> What place is this?
> Where are we now?[14]

Klein makes the very same point in "Armistice Day 1975" after visiting the battlefield at Verdun:

> The fallen dead still lie here—at Verdun, where the very earth is a massive graveyard, in scores of neatly trimmed cemeteries with row upon row of orderly white crosses, in silent ossuaries—all of them dating from that war which has scarred our century much as it has scarred the land here with these inerasable trenches of the Western Front.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> They are rather like quiet, ghostly parks, symmetrical and orderly and sadly desolate. One has the feel of men and deeds too much forgotten.[15]

One of Klein's finest essays, "Armistice Day 1975" was reprinted in the New York TIMES the next year as "The Poppies, The Stillness" and in READER'S DIGEST (abridged) the year after as "All Quiet on the Western Front."

Remembrance of the dead is also the theme of a regional essay, "'Lost in the Cherry Mine,'" which appeared in April, 1977. One is reminded of Sandburg's compassion for the American workingman—"The Sayings of Henry Stephens" is about a miner—as Klein tells the story of Illinois' greatest disaster: "They say it was a cold day that Saturday with a hard, icy rain falling in the pre-dawn darkness as the 481 men assembled at the tipple of the St. Paul mine for another day's work. And another day's pay. $1.56. Payday would be Monday. But only for some of them."[16] And at the close of the article, his insistence on the permanence of the event in human memory is even expressed in a Sandburg-like style: "the memories will never pass, not as long as stone lasts, or life. There will be those tombstones, those words, 'Lost his life in the Cherry Mine.'"

It is also interesting to note that Klein has written essays about Chicago and the Illinois prairie—surely the most famous poetic subjects in the Sandburg canon. "Chicago . . . A Visit in Urban Purgatory" appeared in February, 1976. In it the author stresses the same sort of mixture of positive and negative aspects that Sandburg brought out in his CHICAGO POEMS (1916)—and he also sees Chicago as the essential American city: "in many ways this has become the quintessence of the American megapolis, embodying the best and worst of what this country has been, of what it is coming to. The extremes of splendor and squalor, hope and despair, sanctity and corruption."[17] On the one hand, he celebrates the city's achievements—"It has the world's finest symphony orchestra, the biggest hotel, the busiest corner, the highest building, the biggest convention center, the most active airport . . ."—but on the other, he acknowledges its ugly realities: "It is crowded, deteriorating, violent, dull and gray, locked behind its deadbolts at night, depressing and morally and culturally deadening." And like Sandburg the Socialist of the CHICAGO POEMS era, Klein sees "a gulf of . . . yawning infinity between the rich and the poor, between the haves and the have-nots, between those who live amid pneumatic playgirls and those who are surrounded by cockroaches. . . . "

"The Vanishing Prairie" appeared a year later. It is a statement about the changes that are evident on western Illinois farms. Wind is used in the essay as a motif that represents change itself:

> In the tall grass of an abandoned farm house, the wind seems to rustle, like scurrying mice. It hurries through the windowless house, flapping across loose pieces of wallpaper and whistling through a thousand cracks. The heavy blue jeans on the farm line stretch out in their mad ballet. Dust, black and rich, sifts imperceptibly through the remains of an old fence, and across the road. Who has seen the wind? [18]

One is reminded of Sandburg's use of the wind to represent transience in many poems—although it is not a motif in "Prairie," his long lyric about cultural change in the rural Midwest.

In September, 1975, Klein wrote an entire essay on abandoned farm houses much like the one described in the above quotation. "This Old House" is one of his finest achievements. It too resembles Sandburg's poetry—and for a variety of reasons. The themes of transience and remembrance are evident, and the

Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Black soil sifting through a fence.

wind motif, but the author also attaches great significance to the common events of life, and he even repeats his opening line at the end—two other Sandburg trademarks. The following passage is approximately half of the brief essay:

> They are empty now, these old houses, finished, like the chapters of a book that has been read and put aside and no more will be taken down or opened. They dot the countryside, rising ghost-like at the edges of corn and soybean fields, windows gone, doors gaping, alive now only with the sounds of birds and the wind passing through with its ancient song. Sometimes the door bangs, a shutter bumps against the siding, a scrap of curtain waves and the haunting echoes and whispers stir again.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Once there might have been birth and death, new sounds and new cries and the stiff and quiet bodies lying in wooden caskets and in parlors and banks of flowers, farmers mumbling their sympathies, gnarled hands clasping, and the women bringing in casseroles.
>
> Once these houses were new and it was all promise. Excitement over the new curtains and shades, the men delivering the new stove, children gathered around the Arvin radio listening to the Kellogg Singing Lady and Eddie Cantor.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And other times came when the people left the houses and moved off the farm, away from the wind, the long fields and the little schools. Lives passed and the echoes became softer. Curtains frayed, windows were broken and poison ivy wound up the porch posts. The siding turned weathered, then gray and seamed, like the hands of the tough old men. The pump rusts, the wind blows and time passes. All things do.
>
> The houses are empty now.[19]

More than just another essay on some minor facet of the region, "This Old House" is a requiem for a way of life that is disappearing: the family farm.

There is also something broadly meaningful about the subject matter of "'No Kicks, No Regrets,'" an essay that appeared in August, 1977. It is one of Klein's few articles that focus on an individual. The opening is a description of cars going past Leslie Ellenwood's old gas station on Route 81 between Cambridge and Kewanee: "Outside, the incessant August rain turns the surface of Rt. 81 into a glistening black ribbon, like plastic electrician's tape. Traffic whines past, tires hissing in the wetness. Not many cars stop here any more. . . ."[20] Ellenwood, who is 76, opened his station forty-five years earlier, and now the man and the place have very little function. The pumps don't work, and so there is no gas to sell—just an occasional oil change or grease job. As is true of all men who live long enough, Ellenwood is a victim of change. But he still comes to the station, not so much to operate it, perhaps, as to remain there for awhile with his memories:

> The place is full of memories. Flat tires in the night. People running out of gas. The daily, unspectacular interchange that marks a man's years in a business such as this.
>
> "I've got no kicks against what we've done at all," Ellenwood says. "Wouldn't have done it any other way."
>
> Noon. He puts the closed sign up in the window, bangs the door and walks through the rain to his house, right next door. No regrets. The road is still a glistening black ribbon. Another car passes, tires hissing in the wetness. Not many of them stop here any more.

Here, too, Klein repeats some phrases from the beginning of the essay, phrases which stress that almost no one stops to enter into Ellenwood's world any more, and which convey a sense of finality about this segment of his life. The cars hissing along are appropriate symbols of the world that is passing him by. Also worth noting here is the author's effective use of words and phrases that are disconnected from whole sentences. This aspect of his style is evident in a number of essays and contributes considerably to the emotional impact of his writing.

Ellenwood's perspective on his career—which Klein summarizes in the article's title—gives him a certain stature: he is satisfied with his life's work, even though it has been unspectacular

and has led to a period of inactivity. He has the kind of quiet strength that Sandburg admired in the American workingman. Moreover, the old worker with memories is portrayed by the poet in such poems as "Jack," "Waiting," and "The Sayings of Henry Stephens."

In fact, Klein's vision of life as a whole is rather like Sandburg's. He does not see a world of tragically frustrated people, where only a few truimph over the problems of life, as Masters does in SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY. Rather, his is a world where transience is the central factor and memories are a natural response to that condition, and where the everyday realities of life, along with the great struggles and disasters, have enduring significance.

Vachel Lindsay's poetry certainly did not have an influence on Klein's regional essays, but the latter's achievement is reminiscent of the Springfield poet's work in a couple of ways. First, Klein displays an awareness of Lincoln's lingering presence in the state capital, and second, he celebrates his own home town in some of his articles.

Klein visited Springfield in 1976 and wrote about it in an essay called "Abe Lincoln Sleeps Here." Lindsay is not mentioned in the piece—even though his home is preserved on Fifth Street—but the author deeply responds to the presence of Lincoln in the city, just as the poet did in "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." As Klein puts it, "Lincoln's presence is that of a hallowed martyr, a secular saint, and his myths and legends go straight to bedrock."[21] Lindsay certainly felt that way, and he also believed that Lincoln and the state government—to quote Klein again—"have converged in a unique and permanent fusion, even though the one is past and the other always present." Lindsay felt that this fusion made Springfield a unique governmental center, one that had national implications—and Klein says as much when he comments, "This rare combination of historical presence and governmental power makes Springfield in its way like a small Washington. . . ."

But the state capital is not the newspaperman's home town—as it was for Lindsay, who celebrated its past and its potential in such poems as "On the Building of Springfield," "The Town

of American Visions," and "The Springfield of the Far Future." However, Klein takes a similar approach to Peoria in articles like "The Best Place in Town" and "Downtown Peoria." The former appeared in March of last year, and it is based on the author's visit to the section of the city where he grew up. As one might expect, most of the essay is composed of his memories:

> We thought this was the best place in town. This East Bluff. There were the hills and playing fields of Glen Oak Park where we practiced football in the autumns and skated on the lagoon in the wintertime, clumping into the coal stove heat of the warming house on our tubular hockey skates. There were woods along the bluffs, intriguing and mysterious with their narrow footpaths and their vague and nameless fears about the gangs from down in the valley. There were a hundred alleys to explore where we sometimes unearthed such spectacular treasures as an ironing board, a brass lamp, a broken wagon with ball bearing wheels.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We thought this was the best place in town.[22]

Masters, Sandburg, and Lindsay also looked back nostalgically to the days of their youth—in the farming community of Petersburg, with its pioneer atmosphere (Masters's THE SANGAMON), in the rugged little prairie town of Galesburg, with its mixture of immigrant groups (Sandburg's ALWAYS THE YOUNG STRANGERS), in the state capital of Springfield, with its political activity (Lindsay's "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan"). Although Klein spent his youth in a much larger city, the East Bluff section of Peoria had a certain small-town atmosphere about it: "Families sat on the porches and called back and forth to one another. The mailman knew everybody by name. And there were peddlers selling vacuum cleaners, brushes, Watkins products, and in the summertime, corn and beans off the backs of their trucks. There was a sense here almost of the village. . . ."

But Klein also remembers downtown Peoria, and like Lindsay in THE GOLDEN BOOK OF SPRINGFIELD (1920), he has high hopes for the future of his city. "Downtown Peoria" appeared in November, 1975, and it includes the author's recollections of the city's center as a place of fun and excitement: "There were crowds downtown until late at night. There were drug stores and candy shops and places where the high school kids bought malteds and ice cream. There were little taverns in the alleys and winking signs at night and crowds of people waiting to get into these theaters."[23]

But the downtown of present-day Peoria has enough empty buildings to create a depressing effect, and Klein sees the situation as "a reflection, perhaps, of a social order so eager to embrace that which glitters brightest that it abandons the old at the first sign of decline." He is anxious to save the center of his city because, as he puts it, "The roots of the city are here, in all these stores, and the memories. . . . " Hence, with an enthusiasm that would have made Lindsay—the artist of "The Village Improvement Parade" —overjoyed, he proposes some changes:

> A farmer's market. Yes. Sculpture. Yes. Fountains and benches. Yes.
>
> But something more: maybe a real sidewalk cafe, or two of them. Street vendors with hot pretzels or bagels and cold drinks, as they have in New York. Music downtown, not canned, but concerts by jazz bands, string quartets, quintets, guitarists. A bakery where people can buy good bread and pastries. A wine shop. Intriguing taverns and restaurants. . . .

This optimism, too, is characteristic of Lindsay. In fact, the latter not only envisioned a better future for Springfield, in "The Illinois Village" he urged all those who were disenchanted with America, "Turn to the little prairie towns,/ Your higher hope shall yet begin."[24] Sixty-five years later, Klein is able to report, with evident satisfaction, that such a trend is under way. At the opening of a 1976 essay called "Lacon . . . Where the Livin' Is Steady," he says,

> People keep coming back to these small towns along this vital river, amid these fertile green prairies. More than ever now, they say. Part of a national trend. People beginning to get out of the big cities with their smog, traffic, crime and chaos. Back to towns where people know other people, where they are individuals with names rather than numbers, where they can walk the quiet, shaded streets and feel a part of something.[25]

As this remark indicates, in spite of his attachment to Peoria, he is, like Lindsay, an advocate of the small town.

Thus, in many ways Jerry Klein is the legitimate heir of Masters, Sandburg, and Lindsay in midwestern literature. He probes into the life of western Illinois communities, and he is sensitive to those who lie gathered together in the small-town graveyards. He expresses compassion for the soldier and the workingman; he is a witness to the contrasts of the city and the cultural

changes of the prairie. He feels the continuing presence of Lincoln in the Illinois state capital, and he identifies closely with his home town—recalling its past, envisioning its future.

While the kinship between these three poets and Klein is undeniable, it is not the result of conscious imitation of their work. After all, they were primarily poets; he is an essayist. Rather, the real source for most of the resemblances is Klein's sensitivity to the western Illinois region—a region which Masters, Sandburg, and Lindsay also thoroughly absorbed and reflected, and which now has absorbed them. In the process of examining the land and the people of his native region, the newspaperman has naturally come to reflect their perspectives in his own work. More importantly, he has, at the same time, raised journalistic prose to the level of significant literary art.

Photo by Jack Bradley. Courtesy of Peoria JOURNAL STAR.

Western Illinois prairie.

NOTES

[1]"Prairie," THE COMPLETE POEMS OF CARL SANDBURG, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1970), p. 83.

[2]Interview with Jerry Klein, October 12, 1977. All of the quotations in the next five paragraphs are from this source. A tape recording of the interview is available in the Jerry Klein Collection at the Center for Regional Authors, Western Illinois University Library.

[3]Letter from Jerry Klein to John E. Hallwas, January 9, 1978, in the Jerry Klein Collection, op. cit..

[4]"Along the Spoon . . . ," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 13 Oct., 1968, p. C-1. Since most of the articles quoted from in this study appear on a single page of the newspaper, subsequent quotations from the same article are not footnoted. Copies of all of Klein's feature articles are in the Jerry Klein Collection, op. cit.. Permission to quote from the articles has been granted by the author.

[5]"The Other End of the Spoon," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 17 July, 1977, p. E-1.

[6]"Lewistown," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 9 May, 1976, p. D-1.

[7]"Beardstown," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 17 June, 1973, p. E-1.

[8]"Havana: The Memories Linger On . . . ," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 14 April, 1974, p. C-1.

[9]"Canton—The 30's Stay," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 5 Aug., 1973, p. C-1.

[10]"There's No Rush in Rushville . . . ," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 29 June, 1975, p. E-1.

[11]"Goofy Ridge, Where the Livin' is Easy," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 16 March, 1975, p. C-1.

[12]Interview with Jerry Klein, op. cit..

[13]"Galesburg," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 15 April, 1973, p. A-1.

[14]"Grass," THE COMPLETE POEMS OF CARL SANDBURG, p. 136.

[15]"Armistice Day 1975," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 9 Nov. 1975, p. A-1.

[16]"'Lost in the Cherry Mine,'" Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 24 April, 1977, p. A-1.

[17]"Chicago . . . A Visit in Urban Purgatory," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 22 Feb., 1976, p. A-1.

[18]"The Vanishing Prairie," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 8 May, 1977, p. E-1.

[19]"This Old House," Peoria JOURNAL STAR,14 Sept., 1975, p. D-2.

[20]"'No Kicks, No Regrets,'" Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 14 Aug., 1977, p. D-1.

[21]"Abe Lincoln Sleeps Here," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 25 April, 1976, p. A-1.

[22]"The Best Place in Town," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 27 March, 1977, p. A-1.

[23]"Downtown Peoria," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 16 Nov., 1975, p. A-1.

[24]"The Illinois Village," COLLECTED POEMS, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 72.

[25]"Lacon . . . Where the Livin' Is Steady," Peoria JOURNAL STAR, 22 Aug., 1976, p. D-1.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

One of the first decisions of the editorial board of this journal was that, in each of the initial issues, information would be included concerning various regional resource collections existing in Western Illinois. It is hoped that various of these collections at places such as Knox, Augustana, Illinois, and other colleges might be described, as well as those being gathered by other active historical organizations in the area.

Since time has rushed by so quickly since the establishment of this journal, it was decided that the work being done in regional studies by Western Illinois University Libraries might merit one of the earlier descriptions. Much of the work completed here is in the Archives and Special Collections. A recently acquired collection of materials relates to the life and work of Virginia S. Eifert (1911-1966), a well-known nature writer and biographer from Springfield. Altogether, Eifert wrote nineteen books, including RIVER WORLD (1959), LAND OF THE SNOWSHOE HARE (1960), and LOUIS JOLIET, EXPLORER OF RIVERS (1961). She also produced paperback guidebooks to Illinois flora and fauna, such as BIRDS IN YOUR BACKYARD (1941), ILLINOIS MAMMALS (1943), and FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE SPRING (1947). Mrs. Eifert wrote special pieces as well for such periodicals as AUDUBON MAGAZINE, NATURE MAGAZINE, and CANADIAN NATURE. She was most well known in Illinois, however, for her work with the journal of the Illinois State Museum, THE LIVING MUSEUM, which she not only founded but edited for over twenty-five years. The Virginia S. Eifert Collection at Western Illinois University came into existence mainly through the work of Orvetta M. Robinson, a close friend of Mrs. Eifert and a former student at W. I. U. (1939-1941).

The Eifert Collection is only one part of the Center for Regional Authors, which is devoted to materials by and about writers from western Illinois and immediate areas. The primary focus has been upon Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, and Mark Twain; but with the help of various members of the faculty and the library staff, the three-year-old Center for Regional Authors is

continuing to develop collections of material dealing with John Hay, Don Marquis, Floyd Dell, and others. In fact, Mrs. Gordana Rezab, University Archivist, has built up a rather large file of reference cards treating authors long since forgotten by western Illinois, and even by the communities in which they lived. Individual items in the Center for Regional Authors now number in the hundreds, and include some unpublished poems and correspondence by Masters and Sandburg, many of the scarce issues of the REEDY'S MIRROR, POETRY, and other magazines, and a large number of first editions.

The library has also acquired the papers of Congressman Thomas F. Railsback. These cover his official activities from 1967 to 1974, including the work of the House of Representatives committee which investigated the Watergate scandal. The files contain studies of economic and social conditions in west-central Illinois, juvenile delinquency, prison reform, gun control, and self-government for Washington, D. C..The papers of Railsback's first two years are presently being processed by Mrs. Sheila Nollen, a graduate student in the Department of History.

One of the new activities of the Archives and Special Collections Department is in the area of historical music and music education materials of Illinois. The library has an almost complete collection of the respected journal ILLINOIS MUSIC EDUCATOR from 1947 to the present, many tape recorded interviews and stories of Illinois leaders in music, old music, and various other music publications. Though the library has not moved in the direction of actually recording folk music as it might still exist in western Illinois, it is to be hoped that, someday, if the General Assembly is generous enough, such recordings might be made.

The one-half millionth volume accessioned to the library holdings was received during the spring commencement exercises of 1977. A leather-bound volume of DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS OF NORTH AMERICA, by Frank C. Bellrose, Jr., was presented by the author to library director Pearce Grove. Also included in Mr. Bellrose's gift was a substantial collection of the author's personal correspondence, notes, drafts, and manuscripts. Dr. Bellrose worked for many years with the Illinois Natural Survey in Havana, Illinois.

Of particular interest to historians is the Illinois Regional Archival Depository (I.R.A.D.). Beginning in the summer of 1976, under the auspices of the Secretary of State, county records from the sixteen counties of western Illinois began to be transferred to the university Archives. Western Illinois University, along with five other senior universities in the state, is now an ever-growing official center for local historial records. Mainly nineteenth-century accessions, the collection includes, among others: court records collections books, reports of highway commissioners, poll books, tally sheets, supervisor's financial reports, school district reports, chattel mortgages, county clerk's minutes of meetings, treasurer's reports, and township assessed evaluations. In addition to these county records the university's I.R.A.D. houses special collections of public records, such as microfilm copies of deed books, federal and state census manuscripts (population schedules complete from 1820 to 1880), and Military Tract warrants. All of these collections are now being transferred to magnetic tape for computer output programs under the direction of Robert P. Sutton. Finally, the department has on magnetic tape the complete election returns for every Illinois county, for every election (federal and state), for every party and candidate from 1824 to 1974. A tape dump of the data is on file and available to the public.

Separated from the activities of the library at Western is the Western Illinois University Museum. Begun several years ago as a student-sponsored activity, the museum has grown to such size that its sponsors and directors must soon decide about the necessity of spacial expansion. The fall open house for 1977 included displays in tole painting, Indian workmanship, and woodworking skills. The spring open house for 1978 was centered upon the theme of "Early American Life Styles." Students from McDonough County were asked to conduct projects in areas such as: soap making, canning, cooking with early recipes, quilting, butter making, and sewing.

A recent addition to the museum's holdings in the "Eph" Mercer collection of store antiques and Civil War relics. The Mercer antiques include an old drugstore counter, with commercial soap and medicine bottles from fifty years past, and remnants and odds

and ends from the Civil War era. Mercer evidently had a great urge to collect items related to the 84th Illinois Infantry Regiment, and these pieces are now on display in the museum.

We must congratulate Knox College for their fine celebration of the centenary of the birth of Carl Sandburg. Held on four weekends through January, 1978, the programs included such names as Gwendolyn Brooks, Poet Laureate of Illinois; Howard K. Smith, long time commentator for the American Broadcasting Company; Margaret Sandburg; Robert Johannsen, Department of History, University of Illinois; Stephen Oates, Lincoln biographer and historian; and numerous members of the intellectual community throughout the state of Illinois. The Chairman of the Carl Sandburg Centenary Committee was Douglas L. Wilson of Knox College, and assisting him was Rodney O. Davis, also of the Knox faculty.

Victor Hicken

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

JOHN MILTON HAY: THE UNION OF POETRY AND POLITICS. By Howard I. Kushner and Anne Hummel Sherill. Boston: Twayne, 1977. Pp. 217. $9.95.

The traditional view of John Hay has long been that he was a man of several talents, some of them bordering on genius, but one who, for whatever reasons, could never bring himself to follow though sufficiently in any area, be it poetry, history or diplomacy, to make the major contributions seemingly well within his capacity. He lacked whatever it took—drive, discipline, desire—to capitalize fully on brilliant beginnings. The result, so runs the prevailing argument, was that although he contributed some to American literary history, national political life, and international relations, his contributions were always more modest, and therefore less significant, than they could and should have been.

Not at all, insist Howard Kushner and Anne Hummel Sherrill, the authors of JOHN MILTON HAY: THE UNION OF POETRY AND POLITICS, their contribution to Twayne's World Leaders Series. To support their provocative argument that Hay, intensely ambitious, was fully aware of his talents and keenly attuned to the main chance, the authors establish as the two formative influences on the very young Hay the examples of his father and of his uncle. Attracted to both models, Hay at first found himself torn between conflicting ideals. While his father Dr. Charles Hay was content to cultivate his own small Illinois garden, Milton Hay, a lawyer, was attracted to the possibilities of outward success and great public power. The conflict was resolved when Hay, through the offices of his uncle, met Abraham Lincoln. In the rail-splitter-lawyer he found his beau ideal, a model that combined neatly both his father's and his uncle's roles. In choosing Lincoln, however, Hay was repudiating, probably unconsciously, the modest, less ambitious aspects of the model offered by his own father, a village physician wholly unattracted to the possibilities of upward mobility characterized by material gain and public visibility. Indeed, in a revealing document not quoted by Kushner and Sherrill, Dr. Hay once wrote,

in his cautious way, of Benjamin Franklin's life: it "has been productive perhaps of almost as much harm as good," for, in an argument that anticipated, in the year of his son's birth, the latter's stance in his novel THE BREADWINNERS over four decades later, he proposed that "every muddy brained, stupid boy, who might have made a tolerable farmer, or mechanic, imagines after having read the life of Franklin, that by reading and studying as he did, that he will one day become a great philosopher, a great orator or a great man of some kind. But after many years trying at the professions of law, medicine, divinity . . . he finds at last, that it is necessary to have the talents as well as the industry of Dr. Franklin, in order to become a great man."[1] No wonder that while reluctantly putting behind him the homely example of his somewhat colorless, docile father, Hay should turn willingly and, finally, enthusiastically to Ben's most dramatic nineteenth-century avatar. Never mind that his enthusiasm for the successful presidential candidate was not immediately abated, although from the beginning it should be noted, he did recognize the potential for exercising great power inherent in the presidential office itself. Consequently, Hay's diary entries for the early years of his four-year stay in the White House invariably refer to Lincoln as "the Tycoon," as the authors note. What should be emphasized, however, is that when at a later date Hay went over these diaries, he often crossed out the term, replacing it usually with "the President." He did so either because his attitude toward the memorialized Lincoln had changed or because the sobriquet "Tycoon" had become contaminated in the Gilded Age, as the authors suggest. The full explanation for the change, I would venture, would incorporate both elements.

That Hay's early White House experiences colored everything that he would attempt in the next four decades, the authors assert time and time again. "Thus, John Hay increasingly viewed the Civil War as a revolution which had redirected the course of American history. Hay would spend a good deal of his life protecting and affirming both the results of that revolution and the image of its greatest hero, Abraham Lincoln. He also would use his relation to both to advance his own career" (p. 43).

Working from this base—Hay's whole-hearted adoption of Lincoln's democratic views and his commitment to the ideal of the American republic—the authors go on to describe the unity of Hay's thought and life. That his thought and life—at least after the early 1860's—did possess such unity is a notably revisionist position in Hay studies. Indeed, taking on Hay's most distinguished biographer to date, Tyler Dennett, Kushner and Sherrill insist in no uncertain terms that their central argument is that "John Hay's political career was not at war with his literary career" (p. 44). He did not break away from "poetry to [embrace] politics" (as Dennett would have it), but in his life there is a successful "union of poetry and politics" (as Kushner and Sherrill have it). It was misleading, they insist, to say that Hay was a revolutionary when young (and poetical) and a conservative when older (and political), unless one notices that the revolution Hay advocated in his early poetry and in CASTILIAN DAYS was not for the United States but for countries in which republicanism had not yet asserted itself. Whenever he did write about the United States he wrote conservatively, in accordance always with Lincoln's republican ideals. One agrees with the main thrust of this argument, although it should be noted that the writers nowhere mention Hay's quiet decision to omit in the later editions of CASTILIAN DAYS those chapters advocating revolutionary change for Spain. That decision may well be explained within the terms of the authors' overall argument, but it should not have been bypassed.

This study questions still other received views of Hay's life and work and, I think, largely upsets them. For instance, they demonstrate clearly that throughout his career—especially in the years 1865-70, 1875-81, and throughout the 1890's, and contrary to his protests, particularly to his literary friends—Hay was a vigorous and persistent office-seeker. Earlier students have too readily taken Hay at his word on the matter, perhaps because Henry Adams in the EDUCATION presented Hay in that same diffident way, choosing to characterize his life as one fully controlled by the "strong god circumstance." Again not so. Hay's clear purpose in life, they insist, was marked by his single-minded adherence to his perception of the keys to "upward mobility and political success," namely "association with Lincoln, party regularity, and industrial

wealth" (p. 84). The important consequence of their seeing Hay in this way is that they can detect the hitherto unexpected coherence and efficacy of his life of public service, beginning with his appointment as Ambassador to the Court of St. James in 1897 and ending only, after seven years as Secretary of State, with his death in 1905. Indeed, the Hay who emerges from these pages is a fully responsible, highly astute, generally efficacious and, until the onset of illness in the last years of his tenure as Secretary of State, quietly energetic world leader. The case, as made, is both appealing and cogent. From now on, I would venture, the burden of proof lies squarely with those who would question it.

[1]Ms letter, Charles Hay to Milton Hay, 17 April, 1838, A. E. Beston Collection, University of Illinois.

George Monteiro
Brown University

JOHN HAY. By Robert L. Hale. Boston: Twayne, 1978. Pp. 164. $9.50.

The critical treatment of John Hay's literary work is problematic from the start because it is the product of a famous diplomat. In addition to reflected glory from the diplomatic sphere there is the problem of perhaps undue contemporary fame, for John Hay was the author of two very different and very popular literary successes, the quaint-but-earthy dialect poems, PIKE COUNTY BALLADS, and the anonymous anti-labor novel, THE BREADWINNERS. To further complicate matters, he is still best known and most respected for the solid, serious, ten-volume product of his collaboration with John G. Nicolay, ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A HISTORY. Finally, it might be said that John Hay's literary importance was partly achieved by association, as friend and correspondent of Henry Adams, Henry James, William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain, among others.

By the very structure of his book, Robert Gale gives these facts their due. Two chapters are devoted to biography (one of which begins in 1890, the year Hay effectively ended his literary career), one to "Literary Friends," and one each to Hay's poetry, his fiction, his travel book CASTILIAN DAYS, his LINCOLN,

and his addresses. Gales's assessment of Hay's proper place in American letters is perhaps the most useful insight his book has to offer. His account of the particular kinds of influence Hay exerted in his many and varied literary relationships is an excellent case in point. "He merited Henry Adams's respect, exchanged laughs with Mark Twain, and was friendly with William Dean Howells, saw worth in Henry James well before the critics did, and befriended the most robust poet of the century—Walt Whitman. These friends and others may have differed with Hay about questions of substance and style, but all of them agreed that Hay was a cherished comrade" (p. 53).

When it comes to specific criticisms of Hay's work, the book is less useful. Following the Twayne format, Gale gives a generous summary of each book, but he offers little original critical commentary, except in the matter of style, which he submits to the finest of scrutinies. After recording a few grammatical howlers in the LINCOLN, for example, he goes on to complain that in the ten-volume work, "the historians use three idioms that grate slightly" (p. 117), and proceeds to enumerate them.

On the whole, JOHN HAY is useful as the most general introduction to its subject. Gale's portrait of Hay as a man of letters is accurate, though it is not new. His final assessment of Hay's adumbrated literary career, "Hay had the means and talent to become part of that intellectual ferment [of the nineties], but he failed to do so" (p. 126), echoes that of Howells in 1905: "He avouched his ability to have done what he wished in literature, if only he had wished it enough." [1]

[1] "John Hay in Literature," NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, 181 (September 1905), 351.

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HOPEWELL IN THE LOWER ILLINOIS VALLEY: A REGIONAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF HUMAN BIOLOGICAL VARIABILITY AND PREHISTORIC BEHAVIOR. By Jane E. Buikstra. Chicago:Northwestern University Archaeological Program, Scientific Papers, No. 2, 1977, $5.25

In HOPEWELL IN THE LOWER ILLINOIS VALLEY, Buikstra applies a research perspective to the study of Middle Woodland

skeletal remains that is long overdue. Her approach diverges from many previous, more traditional osteological studies in two important ways. First this analysis is regional in scope and holistic in design. Archaeological information from an intensively studied portion of the lower Illinois Valley is evaluated along with a detailed osteological analysis of human skeletal remains from the area, in an effort to produce meaningful statements about human culture history.

Second, Buikstra applies a range of contemporary bioanthropological methods and techniques to her data to create a model of epigenetic variability for all available Middle Woodland skeletal series within the study area. Two widely debated hypotheses relating to Hopewell biological relationships are evaluated. One hypothesis (Willey 1966) characterizes Hopewell as a single genetically distinct group. Another (Caldwell 1964) views the Hopewell phenonomen as an ideology or "interaction sphere" participated in by numerous regionally distinct populations. A lack of integration of archaeological, environmental, and osteological data has reduced the utility of many earlier studies attempting to address similar problems (Neumann 1952, 1960, 1966; H. Neumann 1960).

An excavation strategy emphasizing total exposure of cemetery and mound areas was employed at the Gibson Mound complex in an attempt to gain an accurate idea of variability within a Middle Woodland skeletal population. This produced information on individuals often not included in earlier studies, including the young, the cremated, the female and the artificially deformed. This approach is in marked contrast to more traditional excavations which concentrated on recovery of artifacts or high status burials.

Chapters two and three present a clear and concise description of the methods employed in age and sex determinations of the skeletal series, and a well supported discussion of estimates of such paleodemographic factors as mortality rates and population density.

In chapter four status differention and social complexity is examined. Five key variables, including mortuary unit, mound group membership, position within a mound, post-mortem handling, and type of associated cultural materials, are isolated and evaluated. The evidence supports a view of a markedly nonegalitarian Hopewell society, where key males and their dependents

had access to an inordinate amount of wealth and preferred burial areas. Status appears to have been inherited rather than achieved.

Chapter five presents a well-documented analysis of biological distance within Middle Woodland skeletal series, utilizing discrete, nonmetrical traits. A picture of stable, long-term local occupations emerges, providing some support for the Caldwell position. A tendency towards a selection of tall individuals in high status burials, long noted by many archaeologists, is viewed here as a function of nutritional differences rather than as a genetic quirk reinforced by class endogamy.

Buikstra's study has added new dimensions to our formerly artifact-oriented view of the Hopewell phenomenon, and has offered useful directions for further research. The employment of some rather awkward terms, such as "burial program," or the difficulty of duplicating her total excavation strategy in light of current research funding difficulties, does not detract from her study. She presents a convincing statement of what can be accomplished when a bioanthropologist is not confined to the study of bones for their own sake, and a well-designed holistic research strategy is employed.

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HISTORY OF MERCER COUNTY, ILLINOIS, 1882-1976. By Daniel T. Johnson. Aledo, Illinois: Mercer County Bicentennial Commission, 1976. Pp. 820. $25.00.

Daniel T. Johnson had less than 20 months to prepare this volume, and this basic time constraint suggests many other limitations under which he must have labored. What he was obliged to produce was a book that is, in its basic format, quite similar to the Mercer County History of 1882, a book likewise commissioned on the occasion of a national anniversary, the national centennial in that case.

Yet in spite of the obvious handicaps, Johnson's book rises above some of the disabilities of the nineteenth-century genre of county histories. The author is able to show temporal continuities

and institutional change in a way that was beyond the capacity of the nineteenth-century compilers; and his book shares the dominant advantage of the earlier volumes: a wealth of names and biographical information. Genealogists will be pleased that it has a complete index of names.

Professionally most satisfying are the long chapters on agriculture and education in Mercer County. Though dependent on submitted material, they nonetheless convey to the reader a clear notion of changes over time. The education chapter delineates the impact of changing social priorities, of community prosperity and decline and rural depopulation, and of school consolidation; and the chapter on agriculture reveals the force of technological change, changes in crops and livestock and methods of cultivation, and ultimately in the very quality of rural life.

Two chapters of the book are merely annalistic, and elsewhere the selection of material seems necessarily to have been unsystematic. Much of the content of the volume is episodic, but some of the brief treatments of special subjects are quite valuable; Western Illinois readers will be grateful to Johnson for making accessible a reasonably complete sketch of Aledo's William and Vashti College, for example.

Naturally one might wish for a more thorough treatment of such matters as the development and decline of Mercer County's once-flourishing Mississippi River trade and river towns, of conflicts within the county (though Johnson makes more of this than a nineteenth-century county historian would), of the interaction of ethnic groups, or even a more conceptual treatment of the twentieth-century "modernization" of the county such as Richard Jensen has just rendered for the state as a whole.

But given the definition of his project, Johnson has given us a valuable work, much better than most recent, similar Sesquicentennial or Bicentennial efforts, and it will be a useful reference for a long time.

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BREATHING TOKENS. By Carl Sandburg. Edited by Margaret Sandburg. New York: Harcourt, 1978. Pp. 177. $8.95. A GREAT AND GLORIOUS ROMANCE: THE STORY OF CARL SANDBURG AND LILIAN STEICHEN. By Helga Sandburg. New York: Harcourt, 1978. Pp. 319. $12.95.

A generation ago, Carl Sandburg was accounted one of America's major poets. The 1942 edition of Louis Untermeyer's MODERN AMERICAN POETRY gave twenty pages to Sandburg's poems, a number surpassed only by Whitman, Robinson, Frost, and Eliot. After a thin sheaf of idol-breaking lyrics appeared in Harriet Monroe's new monthly, POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE, early in 1914, the reputation of the young poet-socialist grew steadily through many volumes, culminating with COMPLETE POEMS in 1950. A critical response to that climax volume by William Carlos Williams, ironically appearing in Miss Monroe's by then venerated magazine, marked the beginning of a toboggan slide of Sandburg's reputation that has continued to the present day. Williams charged his colleague with the lack of a poetic theory and with a resulting formlessness, a judgment that has prevailed among readers ever since. Now we are invited to take another look at this prairie poet in books produced by two of his daughters and timed to appear in the centennial year of his birth.

BREATHING TOKENS, edited by the eldest daughter, Margaret, has 118 previously unpublished poems, carefully gleaned from hundreds remaining in manuscript, and written during all phases of Sandburg's career. The familiar roles are there: the poet of prairies, sea floors, and the Indian past; the poet of the people and the fighter against cruelty and indifference; the Lincoln bard; the old dreamer, idealist, and "moonshooter." Also there is the Sandburg who was perpetually haunted by loss, death, and evanescent beauty, a man baffled by the mystery of existence, who longed for oblivion and dwelt with fog, mist, ashes, and cool tombs. "Others," subtitled "Fantasia for Muskmelon Days," shows the poet's rush from ripeness:

> Ivory domes . . white wings beating
> in empty space..
> Nothing doing . . nuts . . bugs . . a regular
> absolute humpty-dumpty business . .
> pos-i-tive-ly . . falling off walls
> and no use to call doctor, lawyer,

priest . . no use, boy, no use.
O Pal of Mine, O Humpty Dumpty,
shake hands with me.
O Ivory Domes, I am one of You:
Let me in.
For God's sake—let me in. (p. 14)[1]

Not everything in this volume makes such exhuberant fresh use of the venacular and has the controlled images that we find in the best Sandburg lyrics. Louis Rubin may have exaggerated a bit by suggesting that at least a dozen of these poems stand up to the best Sandburg ever wrote, though many are clearly superior to whole masses of poems—long and short—published in his lifetime. Those that so qualify, I believe, include several brief nature lyrics in which emotions are implied through sharp color images and sounds, as in "Bronzed Grackles" and "Bird Cries and Burnt Flowers"; a few poems of wit and philosophy, the best being, perhaps, "Two Commentaries on Humpty Dumpty"; and the haunting "Heaven Is a Valley of Cool Timber," with its lullaby-like refrains. BREATHING TOKENS adds to the poet's total canon, which can be impressive, but it will not greatly enhance his reputation in the long run. What might is a volume of selected poems that fans away the chaff and retains the essential Sandburg, likely to be found among the hundreds of shorter lyrics that make brief powerful statements on life and are controlled by simple vivid imagery.

In A GREAT AND GLORIOUS ROMANCE, Helga Sandburg, the youngest of the three daughters, has told of the early years of a long successful marriage between her father and the remarkable Lilian Steichen. The author's method is interesting. She combines impressionistic memories and dreams of childhood with the old Victorian practice of inserting into the text large numbers of family letters and papers, many of which we are seeing in print for the first time. What emerges are vividly sketched pictures of the muckraking journalist and incipient poet, his Phi Beta Kappa socialist wife and homemaker, and a third person, Lilian's brother, the future photographer, Edward Steichen. Also emerging is a strong flavor of the intellectual life led by Midwesterners in the first two decades of this century. It is unfortunate that Helga Sandburg has omitted an index, for the list of names moving in and out of her book is an encyclopedia of the era's literati, political liberals, and artistic folk, a few being Elbert Hubbard, Ole Rolvaag, Amy Lowell,

Isadora Duncan, Eugene Debs, Floyd Dell, Sinclair Lewis, Frost, and Sandburg's western Illinois friends, Masters and Lindsay.

As to the love affair of Carl and his "Paula" (which is regrettably defined by the book's title), can any of us ever hope to locate the mainspring of our parents' life together? The impression is given that the Sandburgs' union flourished best when they were apart, through letters; for the child Helga loses contact with her father and mother when they cease writing intimate things that can be studied and cited by the grown-up daughter. This helps perpetuate the feeling that Sandburg the man was not unlike what he is in his poems—a restless, dreaming questioner, uncertain of life's purposes and unable to find a center. When he was home, everything spun about him "like a great wheel" (p. 314); but, though he is presented as a great family man, he was on the road much of the time, always coming from a lecture tour or starting out on a correspondent's travels abroad. We see him before he became a part of the Lincoln legend and a public entertainer (never held against Dickens and Twain), and still we come away with the sense of something deeply sensitive but curiously impersonal in the man, a quality that everywhere marks his poetry. From afar, he writes tender love letters, always to Paula, and with a note left behind he escapes direct confrontation with his little girl, after a scene: "Dearest Helga—Please forget it—then I won't need to be forgiven" (p. 10). The elusiveness is what the daughter catches. Helga Sandburg is a pro—a novelist, and, like her father, an author of children's stories. A GREAT AND GLORIOUS ROMANCE is much more than the flowery tribute we learn to expect from a child of famous people.

[1]From BREATHING TOKENS by Carl Sandburg, copyright 1978 by Maurice C. Greenbaum and Frank M. Parker, Trustees of the Sandburg Family Trust, copyright 1978 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

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